

# Gendered Discourse: Narrative Voices in the Novels of George Sand

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## Declaration

I declare that this work which is being submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh is entirely the result of my own independent research and is wholly my own composition.

I further declare that this thesis has not already been presented in substance for another degree, and will not be submitted for any other degree in this or any other university.

Material from this thesis has already been published: 'Le Narrateur patriarcal dans l'œuvre romanesque de George Sand' appeared in *George Sand et l'écriture du roman: Actes du XI<sup>e</sup> colloque international George Sand*, ed. by Jeanne Goldin (Montreal: Paragraphes, 1996), pp. 261-67; and 'Writing under the Sign of Difference: The Conclusion of *Indiana*' was published in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 33 (1997), 115-28.

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the importance of gender as a criterion when studying the narrative voices in Sand's novels from *Indiana* (1832) to *Nanon* (1872). It takes as its starting point the monologic and didactic nature of much of Sand's fiction, which is often considered as having contributed to its 'unreadability' today, and moves forward hypotheses about the author's frequent choice of an authoritative, male narrative voice for her novels.

The first chapter looks at a selection of texts with third- and first-person narrators, and argues that even when the narrator is not identified explicitly as male, one can frequently identify a masculine and patriarchal bias in the narrative position, and thus place in question the supposed neutrality of narrative voice. By focusing on the inconsistencies and contradictions in what these narrators say, on that which within the text escapes their control, one can cast doubt on the idea that Sand's choice of a male narrator is either dictated by the literary conventions of the nineteenth century, or is to be seen as a mask behind which she as a female author could hide. I suggest instead that since they subvert the patriarchal male's claim to possess the Absolute Truth, these novels can be read as challenging the structure and authority of a patriarchal society of which the narrative discourse is an expression.

The second chapter analyses the first important subset of Sand's novels which are not narrated by a single authoritative male voice, that is, the novels with multiple narrative voices. Whilst Sand's use of the multi-voiced epistolary form can be seen to repeat some of the patterns studied in the previous chapter, since one voice is often dominant, the 'fragmented' narratives of *Lélia*, *Isidora* and *La Filleule* subvert narrative unity and raise questions about the limits of literary representation (particularly the representation of the desiring woman).

My final chapter provides a counterpoint to the first by studying the confessional and memoir novels of the latter part of Sand's career in which female voices dominate the narrative. I argue that these novels highlight the process of female self-definition and the link between women's attainment of subjectivity and their emergence from the silence to which patriarchy has confined them. These novels can be seen to valorise female difference, and their rejection of the third-person, public narrative is part of this 'political' project.

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J'essaie [. . .] de retraverser l'imaginaire masculin, d'interpréter comment il nous a réduites au silence, au mutisme, ou au mimétisme, et je tente à partir de là et en même temps, de (re)trouver un espace possible pour l'imaginaire féminin.

(Luce Irigaray, *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un*)

# Introduction

## Reading Sand Today

There is at least a sense in which popular perceptions of Sand have evolved little since Lanson's study of her work for his *Histoire de la littérature française*, first published in 1894. His division of Sand's novels into four main phases retains currency today, and is repeated in a number of recent works (including Robert Godwin-Jones's study of Sand's novels and Frank Bowman's entry on Sand in *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*).<sup>1</sup> In such overviews of Sand's literary output, her novels of the 1830s are seen as being marked by feminist demands (particularly her criticism of marriage), whereas the novels of the 1840s are considered predominantly as expressions of her social and political concerns. The third and fourth phases correspond to the production of the *romans champêtres* (approximately 1848-53), and to the idyllic fictions of the grandmotherly Sand. Whilst it is certainly justifiable to consider Sand's writing as evolutionary, an insistence on the division of her work into a series of distinct periods nonetheless contributes to the perpetuation of certain long-standing beliefs about her *œuvre*. It contains, for instance, the implication that Sand's 'feminist' engagement ceased as she came under the influence of socialist ideas

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Godwin-Jones, *Romantic Vision: The Novels of George Sand* (Birmingham, Alabama: Summa Publications, 1995), pp. 5-8; Frank Bowman, 'George Sand', in *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*, ed. by Peter France (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 739-40.

(or rather that her feminism became a sub-category of her socialism), and also leads to the dismissal of much of her work after *Histoire de ma vie* as inferior and uninteresting, since these novels are presented as lacking the dynamism and vigour of earlier works, and are characterised instead by the goodness and placidity of the writer who has become the 'bonne dame de Nohant'.

That Lanson's categories are not innocent soon becomes clear, since they provide him with a framework for generalised criticisms of Sand's work:

Dans les deux premières périodes de sa vie littéraire, le parti pris dogmatique, la foi romantique ont souvent faussé sa vue et déformé les personnages que la réalité lui présentait. [ . . . ] Dans les deux autres périodes, son optimisme féminin, son besoin d'aimer les gens dont elle disait l'histoire, lui ont fait peupler ses romans d'êtres plus généreux, de passions plus nobles, de plus belles douleurs qu'on n'en rencontre selon la loi commune de l'humanité; elle forme des idées de pures ou hautes créatures sur qui sa large sympathie puisse se reposer sans regret.<sup>2</sup>

Although this extract forms part of an argument in which Lanson takes issue with the perception of Sand as an exclusively idealist writer by pointing to the realist aspects one finds in her novels, and in which he praises her psychological observation, his criticisms crystallise around two key ideas: the dogmatism of her early work, and the placid idealism of much of her later fiction.

Whilst it is in the 'socialist' novels of the 1840s that the didactic narrator is most evident, this characteristic is not entirely absent from earlier novels, as Pierre Moreau remarks:

Du roman passionnel, le roman à thèse se dégage. Sa présence secrète se trahissait déjà dans les *Indiana*, les *Lélia*; toujours, au milieu même des fragments d'autobiographie dont elle parsemait ses premiers livres, la romancière donnait à sa propre expérience un caractère général; [ . . . ] c'est une société qu'elle voulait saisir dans sa vie générale, qu'elle voulait

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<sup>2</sup> Gustave Lanson, *Histoire de la littérature française*, 2nd edn, rev. by Paul Tuffrau (Paris: Hachette, 1951), p. 998.

réformer. A travers les sentiments, se dessinait le tableau des mœurs; derrière les récits d'amour, la critique des institutions.<sup>3</sup>

Michel Raimond betrays a similar distaste for this moralising side to Sand, when he indicates his preference for the *romans champêtres*, in which the didacticism of the narrative has been toned down: 'l'idéal social reste présent dans les romans d'inspiration rustique, mais il cesse d'être prêché avec intempérance'.<sup>4</sup> Finally, in one of the most recent of these encyclopaedias of French literature, Henri Bonnet's largely sympathetic entry on Sand reveals that such criticisms of her tendency to preach have not gone away: 'Il est vrai que [...] tout n'est pas de la meilleure veine, que son idéalisme moralisant prend souvent le dessus'.<sup>5</sup> Bonnet acknowledges that it is the perceived lack of subtlety and allusiveness in the narrative discourse that can be so off-putting for the modern reader, but tries to present other, positive aspects of her work. However, what if it were possible to show that some of the didactic elements in Sand's fiction were not a weakness, but in fact a strength?

Such a radical contention can be productively explored if one challenges the preconception that Sand was a natural, even naïve novelist. This is a perception which has held currency since Baudelaire's remark that '[Sand] jette ses chefs-d'œuvre à la poste comme des lettres'.<sup>6</sup> The parallel between letters and Sand's novels implies that the latter contain an explicit message, directed by the author to the reader, and that they were hastily written with little concern for formal considerations. However, within Sand's work there is a narrative diversity which is frequently obscured by the categorisation of her novels into distinct periods. Her use of varied narrative forms is rarely problematised, and yet it seems to me to be an issue of central importance. Why, for instance, the shift between third-person and first-person, obtrusive and unobtrusive narrators? Why the presence in her work of

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<sup>3</sup> Pierre Moreau, *Le Romantisme* (Paris: Éditions Mondiales, 1957), p. 254.

<sup>4</sup> Michel Raimond, 'George Sand et les romanciers de l'époque romantique', in *Histoire de la littérature française*, ed. by Jacques Roger, 2 vols (Paris: Armand Colin, 1970), II, 725.

<sup>5</sup> Henri Bonnet, 'Sand', in *Dictionnaire des littératures de langue française*, ed. by Jean-Pierre de Beaumarchais, Daniel Couty and Alain Rey, 3 vols (Paris: Bordas, 1984), III, 2103-114 (p. 2105).

<sup>6</sup> Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes*, 2 vols (Paris: Pléiade, 1975-76), II, 282-83.



epistolary novels and of novels which have a fragmented narrative structure? Why towards the end of her career do we find novels with female narrators? It is by distinguishing Sand from her narrators, by insisting on the split between author, implied author and narrator, that one can begin to answer these questions. An approach which detaches the ideology of the narrative voice from that of the author, whether real or implied, enables one to analyse the various narrative discourses of Sand's novels independently of the opinions of the author. It allows in particular for a more critical perspective on Sand's gendering of narrative voice, and it is this which seems to me to be crucial for the re-evaluation of certain preconceptions about Sand's fiction.

At this point one can return to the charges of didacticism levelled at Sand's work and note that those novels which are marked by this authoritative narrative discourse are also those with male narrators. However, if the discourse of the narrator is not equated with that of the author, there is scope for challenging the didactic label, and hence the perception of Sand as an 'avocat' and of her novels as examples of 'le plaidoyer bien construit'.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, as the discourse of these narrators becomes gendered as masculine, not only can their claims to neutrality and reliability be challenged, and their authority subverted, but this also creates the conditions for a critical analysis of the discourse of someone who frequently functions as a representative of the patriarchal order. Now it is clear that in nineteenth-century France the institutions of patriarchy and the status of women were to undergo changes, and hence it is perhaps dangerous to speak of the patriarchal order as if it were a unified, monolithic system. My definition of the term for the purposes of this study is nevertheless ahistorical, and refers to a social system organised by men for men, and which is founded on women's subordination. That is not to say that I think Sand's novels do not consider the material aspects of women's oppression. These are indeed important issues in her work, and her depiction and analysis of women's fate in marriage, the economic inequality which they faced and the violence to which they

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<sup>7</sup> Anna Szabó, *Le Personnage sandien: constantes et variations*, Studia Romanica de Debrecen, XVI (Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, 1991), p. 18.

were subject have received much critical attention. Nor should it be taken to mean that I see women and men as homogenous groups, nor that I consider all men to be dominant and all women to be subordinate (Sand's female characters not only come from a variety of different classes, races and educational backgrounds, but many also adopt a more dominant or resistant position - for instance, Edmée in *Mauprat*, and the eponymous heroines of *Lélia*, *Nanon* and *Jeanne* - and these have been important factors in the interest feminist critics have taken in Sand's novels). But, in nineteenth-century French society women as a group were nevertheless oppressed and denied rights precisely because they were women. It is for this reason that I think it makes sense to generalise about patriarchy, which thus becomes in Maggie Humm's words 'a term by which the totality of oppressive and exploitative relations which affect women [can] be expressed'.<sup>8</sup> As I have already said, the content of Sand's novels represents and criticises the inequities done to women under this system. But on a more abstract, ahistorical level, it seems to me that her novels also contain a reflection on, and analysis of, the mechanisms of patriarchy or what one might call the patriarchal mentality. This becomes evident through a study of the male narrative voices in her novels, for the discourses of these men, despite their social differences or apparent neutrality, share a number of common features. It is this aspect of Sand's reflection on patriarchy which will form the focus of my study in the first and second parts of this thesis. It reveals, I believe, a new and important level of sophistication in Sand's feminist thinking.

However, my notion of gendered discourse goes further than this analysis of the discourse of patriarchy, for consideration of Sand's representation of female narrative voices shows a woman author grappling with issues of women's identity which have lost none of their currency (or even controversy) today. And since this *parler femme* is explored mainly, though not exclusively, in Sand's post-1859 novels, it is possible to show how some of these later works can be of interest to the modern reader, and

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<sup>8</sup> Maggie Humm, *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 159.

thus counter the (predominantly male) literary establishment's disregard for these novels.

Such an approach transcends the traditional division of Sand's novels into distinct periods, and reveals an author reflecting on the male and the female as speaking subjects, thus shedding new light on her work. Although my analysis begins with *Indiana* (1832) and more or less ends with *Nanon* (1872), the approach adopted is not evolutionary, and my corpus is instead divided up along formal lines into male-voiced, female-voiced and multi-voiced narratives. Given that my thesis is grounded in the distinction of author from narrator, it is Sand's prose fiction, rather than her theatre or her non-fictional work which will form the focus of my analysis. My corpus therefore does not include *Histoire de ma vie* as a central text for study since in Sand's autobiography the textual voice of the narrator is less distinct from that of George Sand as author and historical figure than is the case in her novels. Moreover, the absence of this text in my reading of Sand is also a consequence of a desire to distance myself from a particular type of criticism, which sees Sand's fiction as having been largely inspired by events in her own life, and hence sees the autobiography as the key to 'understanding' her novels. My approach, which eschews the autobiography and concentrates on the author's use of narrative voices in her novels, shifts debate on Sand's feminism away from both a concentration on her exceptional life and an analysis of her female characters. Instead, it puts Sand's novels into a productive dialogue with modern feminist theories. It is in this context that the quotation chosen as an epigraph for this thesis becomes relevant, since it seems to me that Sand's novels can be fitted into the double project outlined by Irigaray in *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un*, that is, the attempt to 'retraverser l'imaginaire masculin' and also to '(re)trouver un espace possible pour l'imaginaire féminin'.<sup>9</sup> In what follows, I shall aim to show how, through an attention to Sand's choice and manipulation of narrative voice, these same concerns can be mapped onto her novels.

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<sup>9</sup> Luce Irigaray, *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris: Minuit, 1977), p. 159.

## Part One

### Voices of Authority? Sand's Male Narrators

In Sand's novels, the creation of narratives, and hence an engagement in the literary project, are almost invariably presented as male preserves. To the domination of the male narrative voice in the majority of her novels one must add the numerous examples of male characters who are writers of philosophy (Jacques Laurent in *Isidora*, Pierre in *Monsieur Sylvestre*), history (Urbain in *Le Marquis de Villemer*), political treatises (Raymon in *Indiana*) and poetry (Sténio in *Lélia*). Though one finds numerous examples of female characters who are actresses, singers and artists, few female writers appear as characters.<sup>1</sup> Women's exclusion from literary creation is further figured in Sand's work through the recurring theme of the oral transmission of stories from one man to another, found for example in *Indiana*, *Mauprat* and *Le Dernier Amour*. A variation on this theme is present in the *romans champêtres* when the stories are recounted by the *chanvreur* to an assembled audience, which includes the narrator, a male author called George Sand (or in the case of *La Mare au Diable*, told by the hero, Germain, directly to the narrator). These stories are then transcribed by the narrator who also transposes them from their original regional dialect into

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<sup>1</sup> To the best of my knowledge, only the eponymous heroine of *Lucrezia Floriani* fits into this category (and by the beginning of the action of the novel, she has, in any case, given up writing). I shall consider the separate cases of the female narrators of *Césarine Dietrich* and *Nanon* in Part Three of this thesis.

standard French.<sup>2</sup> In each of these narrative situations the woman is reduced to silence: Indiana retreats to her bedroom before Ralph begins to recount their story; both Edmée and Félicie are dead when Bernard and Sylvestre begin their narratives. Only in *François le Champi* does one find a female narrator, but Mère Monique, who begins the telling of the story, soon relinquishes control of the narrative to the more authoritative *chanvreux*. Sand's novels appear to suggest that to take part in the literary project is to silence the feminine and to take on the mask of the masculine, since the privileges of narrative authority and respect are shown to pertain to the male. Indeed, this view is reinforced in *Indiana* when Noun's attempt at writing is ridiculed by the male narrator:

Noun [. . .] se hasarda jusqu'à écrire. Pauvre fille! ce fut le dernier coup. La lettre d'une femme de chambre! Elle avait pourtant pris [. . .] le style dans son cœur... Mais l'orthographe! [. . .] Hélas! la pauvre fille à demi sauvage de l'île Bourbon ignorait même qu'il y eût des règles à la langue.<sup>3</sup>

Whilst the narrator criticises the form of this letter, Raymon, we are told, reacts against its content and throws the letter into the fire 'dans la crainte de rougir de lui-même' (ibid.). The content of Noun's letter, written after Raymon's sudden abandonment of her, is undoubtedly critical of his behaviour, though it is intended to provoke her lover's return. Its directness has, however, little effect on its addressee, and it does not achieve its desired aim. A second letter from Noun some weeks later meets with a different response:

Le lendemain, Raymon reçut à son réveil une seconde lettre de Noun. Celle-là, il ne la rejeta point avec dédain; il l'ouvrit, au contraire, avec empressement: elle pouvait lui parler de madame Delmare. (p. 98)

Raymon is now in love with Indiana, and the form and style of the letter matter less, since it may contain information about the desired woman. If Raymon can be seen to represent the male reading public and literary world, then the difference in his

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<sup>2</sup> In *François le Champi* there is an additional narrative layer, for the story is retold in standard French by the narrator to a friend before being written down as a novel.

<sup>3</sup> George Sand, *Indiana*, ed. by Béatrice Didier (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), pp. 76-77. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.

reception of these two female-authored texts inscribes an awareness on Sand's part that conventions of form are more important when the content attacks the values and opinions held by that reading public. Whereas in the novel the woman who dares to write critically is mocked because she does not obey the rules of writing, and her letter denied authority as a result, Sand the author follows the conventions of literature, and her novels exemplify and inscribe the equation of narrative authority and the male voice.

None of this will be surprising to the feminist critic approaching Sand's work, for, as Susan Lanser observes, authorial voice, by which she understands a narrative mode that is both heterodiegetic and extradiegetic, 'has been so conventionally masculine that female authorship does not necessarily establish female voice'.<sup>4</sup> Yet within Sand studies this relationship between female author and male narrative voice is a topic which has scarcely received the attention it deserves, and although there have been a number of studies of this phenomenon in a limited number of individual novels, there has as yet been no global study which analyses the general implications of this for our reading of Sand's novels. To some extent this can be attributed to the fact that the structuralist narratology developed by Genette is concerned exclusively with formal, textual structures such as narrative level, narrative time and focalisation, rather than what one might call the markers of narrative authority. It is this gap in such textual theories which has led Lanser to begin to elaborate a feminist narratology. She writes:

What I considered some of the most important elements of point of view - the gender of the narrator, the speaker's basis for authority, the narrator's 'personality' and values, and the relationship between the writer's circumstances and beliefs and the narrative structure of the text - were peripheral to most contemporary theories of point of view.<sup>5</sup>

Lanser argues that the authority of any narrative voice is dependent on both rhetorical and social factors, and that textual authority mirrors social authority:

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<sup>4</sup> Susan Lanser, *Fictions of Authority* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Susan Lanser, *The Narrative Act* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 5.



Discursive authority has, with varying degrees of intensity, attached itself most readily to white, educated men of hegemonic ideology. One major constituent of narrative authority, therefore, is the extent to which a narrator's status conforms to this dominant social power.<sup>6</sup>

Lanser's study of how women writers such as Austen, Eliot and Woolf use this textual voice of male authority focuses particularly on what she perceives as their 'reaching for narrative hegemony'.<sup>7</sup> However, by introducing gender as a constituent of narrative voice and discursive authority, she also creates the conditions for the subversion of this narrative authority and hegemony, since it is precisely by emphasising its gender bias that such authority can be undermined. As Luce Irigaray points out, male discursive authority is dependent on the supposedly universal and objective position to which masculine thought has always laid claim. She argues:

Une loi, perpétuellement méconnue, prescrit toutes réalisations de langages, toute production de discours, toute constitution de langue, selon les nécessités d'une perspective, d'un point de vue, d'une économie: celles de l'homme supposé représenter le genre humain.<sup>8</sup>

It is therefore, Irigaray argues, by exposing and re-establishing the link between the masculine and the supposedly universal, 'neutral' perspective, that the 'Truth' with which this voice claims a privileged relationship can be revealed as 'partielle et sienne' (p. 14). This has implications for the study of narratives, for whilst the reliability of first-person narrators is often questioned on the basis of certain aspects of their character, the third-person narrator is more frequently approached with reverence, and all too often equated with the voice of the author. Wallace Martin writes in this context:

We cannot question the reliability of third-person narrators, who posit beyond doubt or credulity the characters and situations they create. [. . .] Any first-person narrative, on the other hand, may prove unreliable because it issues from a speaking or writing self addressing someone.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Lanser, *Fictions of Authority*, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Lanser, *Fictions of Authority*, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Luce Irigaray, *Parler n'est jamais neutre* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1985), p. 281.

<sup>9</sup> Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 142.

This critical position depends, however, on a view of the third-person narrator as objective and neutral, and becomes untenable when this neutral position is shown in fact to be a masculine one. In light of such an insistence on the gendering of narrative voice, the 'double-voiced' nature of Sand's texts - the male narrative voice and that of the female author behind it - becomes a potentially subversive textual strategy.

Isabelle Naginski sees this double voice in Sand's novels as 'a distinctive narrative voice incorporating both genders'.<sup>10</sup> She writes:

Sand's use of male narrators does not constitute treason against her own sex. On the contrary, it is an enabling strategy that allows her to reclaim a unified human vision beyond gender-imposed restrictions. In the fusion of masculine and feminine elements, Sand invented a new voice. (ibid.)

Whilst Naginski posits that the (male) narrative voice and the (female) authorial voice in Sand's novels combine to create an androgynous literary voice, it seems to me that many of Sand's novels are characterised not by a fusion of these two voices, but rather by a tension between them. The gap between author and narrator is not bridged, but in fact emphasised. This gap can, as a result, be read as the locus of production of feminist meaning in Sand's novels since it is here that the potential unreliability of the narrator is generated, and hence the conditions created for an undermining of his authority. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan describes the unreliable narrator as 'one whose rendering of the story and/or commentary on it the reader has reasons to suspect' and states that 'the main sources of unreliability are the narrator's limited knowledge, his personal involvement, and his problematic value-scheme'.<sup>11</sup> Whilst the first two factors pertain most obviously to intradiegetic narrators, the third can be used to signal the unreliability of an extradiegetic narrator. Rimmon-Kenan argues that 'a narrator's moral values are considered questionable if they do not tally with those of the implied author of the given work' (p. 101). Acknowledging the inherent difficulty of establishing the values of the implied author, Rimmon-Kenan

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<sup>10</sup> Isabelle Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for Her Life* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p. 26.

<sup>11</sup> Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 100.



proposes a number of factors which might signal a gap between implied author and narrator: 'facts' which contradict the narrator's views, internal contradictions in the narrator's language, clashes between the views of the narrator and other characters. She further suggests that it is by a kind of narrative excess that authors may create potentially unreliable narrators, for she writes that 'when an extradiegetic narrator becomes more overt, his chances of becoming fully reliable are diminished, since his interpretations, judgements, generalizations are not always compatible with the norms of the implied author' (p. 103). Whereas Susan Lanser argues that these 'extrarepresentational functions not strictly required for telling a tale [. . .] expand the sphere of fictional authority to "nonfictional" referents and allow the writer to engage, from "within" the fiction, in a culture's literary, social and intellectual debates',<sup>12</sup> I shall contend that in Sand's novels, that part of narrative discourse which exceeds the requirements of the act of representation becomes a marker of unreliability rather than of authority, and that Sand does not so much speak *through* her male narrators, as *past* them.

However, to posit that all of Sand's male narrators are figured as unreliable is an untenable position. In some novels, extrarepresentational narrative acts are minimal, and such covert narrators thus give little scope for the questioning of their authority, whilst in others there are moments when the voice the reader hears, and the opinions advanced seem indistinguishable from those voiced elsewhere by Sand, the real author. I would agree that in certain cases the gap between narrator and implied author is less marked, and consequently not exploited to undermine the narrator's comments and judgements. This is particularly true of the *romans socialistes* of the 1840s (*Le Compagnon du tour de France*, *Le Meunier d'Angibault* and *Le Pêché de Monsieur Antoine*), in which, as Regina Bochenek-Franczakowa argues:

Les narrateurs [. . .] gardent une position privilégiée dans l'univers représenté. Leur compétence est encore renforcée par une autorité

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<sup>12</sup> Lanser, *Fictions of Authority*, p. 17.

irréfutable, aussi bien dans le domaine des éléments fictifs que dans celui de la réalité extra-romanesque.<sup>13</sup>

Bochenek-Franczakowa shows how in these novels the narrator has both an informative and a persuasive function, and notes that 'les moyens de persuasion s'y trouvent particulièrement intensifiés: on a même l'impression qu'il s'agit moins de convaincre que de toucher le lecteur à l'endroit sensible - menaces, offenses, tout moyen semble bon' (pp. 73-74).

Although the didactic element in these 'socialist' novels therefore remains strong and is intended to reinforce a certain message, the same is not necessarily true of the authoritative, and often verbose narrative discourse of other novels. What distinguishes the narrative discourse of the *romans socialistes* from that of other overt narrators is the fact that this discourse is a political one which advocates a socialist cause. Where narrative unreliability is particularly marked is in those novels whose extrarepresentational narrative acts bear on issues of gender and gender identities (both masculine and feminine), and in which the narrator assumes a role in institutionalising patriarchy. Such gender ideologies can be shown to be present to some extent in all of Sand's male-narrated novels, insofar as they are dominated by a male perspective and a male gaze. I shall, however, concentrate on those novels in which such a narrative discourse is particularly pronounced and plays a role in the shaping of the story, in order to analyse the implications of Sand's use of this textual strategy. The list of novels I shall be considering - *Indiana* (1832), *Lettres à Marcie* (1837), *Horace* (1842), *Elle et Lui* (1859) and *Le Dernier Amour* (1867) - is scarcely exhaustive, but these texts, drawn from the complete period of Sand's writing career, cover a variety of different narrative positions and raise issues which find echoes in other of Sand's novels.

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<sup>13</sup> Regina Bochenek-Franczakowa, 'Narrer pour convaincre: un aspect de la vision du monde des romans dits sociaux de George Sand', in *La Pensée sociale dans la littérature française*, ed. by Aleksander Ablamowicz (Katowice: Uniwersytet Slaski, 1981), pp. 64-75 (p. 66).

(i) *'Indiana' and 'La Marquise': Patriarchy First Exposed*

From a narratological perspective, *Indiana* seems initially to be a relatively straightforward text, though it soon reveals a rather more complex narrative structure. Based on the typology of narrative voices which Genette elaborates in *Figures III*, the narrator of this text first appears as both extradiegetic and heterodiegetic, the omniscient observer and reporter of the action. And yet, some fifteen pages from the end, he appears as part of the story and meets with the two main characters, thus rendering himself homodiegetic. Furthermore, the story of *Indiana* is shown to have a metadiegetic source, for it is told to the narrator by Ralph.

Although the narrator remains extradiegetic until the conclusion, he shows himself to be male on the three occasions when he uses the first person: the masculine agreement of 'Vous me trouverez peut-être absolu' on p. 166; the positioning of the 'nous' as male on p. 83 when he writes: 'c'est la violence de nos désirs, la précipitation de notre amour qui nous rend stupides auprès des femmes'; and his alignment with the male sex in his comment: 'La femme est imbécile par nature; il semble que, pour contrebalancer l'éminente supériorité que ses délicates perceptions lui donnent sur nous [. . .]' (p. 251). In the first edition of the novel there were many more such interventions in which the narrator spoke in the first person and identified himself explicitly as male, but these were cut from subsequent editions. Whilst the male narrative voice is weakened in Sand's revised edition of *Indiana*, the gender ideology he presents is not diluted as a result, for only one of the major passages suppressed contains a judgement on one of the characters (it is a passage to which I shall return in the course of my argument). The other cuts effected concern passages in which the narrator reflects on his telling of the story. In a number of cases the narrator insists that his narrative is a reflection of reality rather than a judgement on it (p. 380, note 9; p. 381, note 16; p. 385, note 17), and in others he discusses his treatment of certain events in the story such as Noun's suicide (pp. 382-83, note 1) or the lack of descriptive passages pertaining to the île Bourbon (p. 288, note 14).

As a result, perhaps, of this explicit characterisation of the narrator as male, it is in critical analyses of *Indiana* that the question of the relationship between male narrator and female author has been most completely addressed. Pierrette Daly adopts a similar position to that of Lanser and argues that 'the convention which consists of writing through a masculine narrator is the very first stylistic imperative to which they [women] must conform'.<sup>14</sup> Kathryn Crecelius suggests that this was a convention which influenced the young author of *Indiana*:

On some level, [Sand] felt from the first that narration was a male task, not a female one, or at least that a male narrator was more credible, while nonetheless continuing to assert her own voice.<sup>15</sup>

She further argues that, 'by interposing a separate narrator who, because of his gender and background could not be assimilated to the author' (p. 63), Sand was attempting to distance herself from the narrative. The narrator thus assumes the role of a mask, made necessary, Crecelius suggests, either by the novel's 'controversial content' or 'because of earlier notions regarding male narrative authority' (ibid.), and becomes a means for Sand of 'getting said' some of the truths that she could not pronounce in her own voice because of her sex. Crecelius writes:

There are passages in the novel that seem directly attributable to Sand herself, while others, especially those which express uncertainty about particular events, reveal the viewpoint of an outsider, the narrator. In Gérard Genette's terms, we can distinguish between 'who sees?' (a female) and 'who speaks?' (a male). (p. 62)

I find Crecelius's distinction between male narrator and female focaliser somewhat problematic in the case of *Indiana*, for it implies that although Sand used a male narrator, it was in fact her own perceptions, or at least those of a woman, that he was recording. Moreover, the degree of certainty with which views are expressed is an unreliable means of distinguishing those of Sand from those of the narrator.

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<sup>14</sup> Pierrette Daly, 'The Problem of Language in George Sand's *Indiana*', in *West Virginia George Sand Conference Papers*, ed. by Armand E. Singer, Mary W. Singer, Janice S. Spleth and Dennis O'Brien (Morgantown: Department of Foreign Languages, West Virginia University, 1981), pp. 22-27 (p. 22).

<sup>15</sup> Kathryn Crecelius, *Family Romances* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 62.

Expressions of uncertainty are particularly prevalent when the narrator is speaking of characters' emotions, but, as Crecelius herself remarks, this can be explained by the fact that the narrator was told the story by Ralph. Those passages which are more authoritative, and which Crecelius attributes to Sand, are not directly concerned with the events of the story, but are rather extemporisations on politics or generalisations on human (especially female) nature, which it would be difficult to attribute in their entirety to Sand. The relation between the narrator and the author is more complex than Crecelius allows. Although on one level Sand uses the male narrator as a mask, the male voice does not simply serve as a conduit for the direct expression of her ideas, since the narrator of *Indiana* can be shown to express attitudes more obviously associated with a male representative of the contemporary society.

This is an aspect of narrative voice on which Pierrette Daly comments, for she argues that the narrator and Raymon 'can be identified through their language as belonging to the dominant social class' (p. 24), and that there are similarities between Raymon's rhetoric and that of the narrator. In their relation to language and in their attitude to women, it is clear that Raymon and the narrator do share common ground. Although, like Crecelius, Daly sees the adoption of a male narrative voice as a mask, she is more sensitive to the implications of this on the narrative perspective:

This masculine persona is a convention which imposes its specific sexual features on the novel, thereby excluding what is characteristically feminine. In her attempt to be impartial or neutral, a woman writes through the masculine voice. [. . .] In this configuration, she opposes herself and speaks at times against women. [. . .] The mask that the novelist is compelled to wear denies her sexual identity, and, from this false stand, she writes about women in a distorted, unfaithful and sometimes disloyal, fashion. (p. 26)

Women's voice, Daly argues, is suppressed under the masculine language and conventions of literature. Therefore, Crecelius's distinction between male narrator and female focaliser becomes untenable, for the male narrative mask the woman novelist is forced to wear not only dominates but also distorts the feminine perspective. Whilst Daly's study offers useful insights into the ideology represented



by the narrator of *Indiana*, it seems to affirm the impossibility of writing from a feminine, not to mention feminist, perspective in literature.

Robert Godwin-Jones's study of *Indiana* offers a less absolute view of the masculine nature of the narrative. Like Daly, he emphasises the prejudices and misogyny of the narrator, and notes that the narrator has 'a condescending view of women and often goes out of his way to find justification for the behavior of the male characters'.<sup>16</sup> But Godwin-Jones also detects a process in the text which leads to the 'subtextual undermining of the narrator' (p. 18), for, he argues, it becomes clear in the opening chapters of the novel that 'behind the passive exterior [of the characters] there is an active inner life' (p. 17). The narrator, however, bases his narrative on observable facts. Godwin-Jones contends that 'the effect of this disparity is to alert the reader to the possibility of a quite different interpretation of observable reality and invites him [sic] to distance himself [sic] from the narrator's insistence on empirical observation as the basis for truth' (ibid.). I do not disagree with Godwin-Jones's evidence for the textual undermining of the narrator (and it is an argument to which I shall return later), but it seems to me that the narrator's authority is also undercut in other ways, and with more subversive implications, and that this is achieved precisely through the different discourses on male and female characters which Godwin-Jones has identified.

Far from being neutral, the narrator's perspective in *Indiana* is informed by a patriarchal view of gender roles. In the course of his narrative he will generalise on women, depicting them as naturally emotional, loving and submissive. From early in the novel the narrator places himself in a position of authority vis-à-vis women, dictating the characteristics and qualities which make them both beautiful and desirable to men. In more explicit terms, the narrator places himself in the position of subject, dominating and defining the female object. This is evident from his intimation

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<sup>16</sup> Godwin-Jones, *Romantic Vision*, p. 15.

that women's inferiority and subjugation actually enhance their beauty, and hence their value:

Si madame Delmare n'eût eu, pour l'embellir, son esclavage et ses souffrances, Noun l'eût infiniment surpassée en beauté dans cet instant; elle était splendide de douleur et d'amour. (p. 103)

The narrator is here referring to Noun's suffering as Raymon attempts to end his relationship with her. In both her case and that of Indiana, who lives under the tyranny of an authoritarian husband, the woman's suffering and weakness in relation to the man are stressed, and these are seen to make her beautiful. The above quotation however hides a reality of male power, which is also implicit in the narrator's view of women as creatures of the imagination and emotions. Indiana, for example, is seen to be made for love:

N'était-elle pas née pour l'aimer, cette femme esclave qui n'attendait qu'un signe pour briser sa chaîne, qu'un mot pour le suivre? Le ciel, sans doute, l'avait formée pour Raymon. (p. 90)

Whilst this statement reads like an example of *style indirect libre*, the context establishes it as part of the narrator's rather than Raymon's discourse, though at this stage in the narrative the potential overlap between the views of the narrator and those of Raymon is interesting given the patriarchal ideology which I posit as underlying what the narrator says. His analysis of Indiana in this extract points to a rebellious streak in her nature, though it also contains this rebellion in dependence on a man, since it is only for love that she would leave her husband. But such a character trait is not limited to one woman. Indiana becomes representative of all women, for the narrator later informs us that 'elle eût donné sa vie sans croire que ce fût assez payer un sourire de Raymon. La femme est faite ainsi' (p. 274). This idea that women will do anything for love is further developed when the narrator relates Indiana's decision to leave her husband and return to France to be with Raymon, for he states:

L'amour, c'est la vertu de la femme; c'est pour lui qu'elle se fait une gloire de ses fautes, c'est de lui qu'elle reçoit l'héroïsme de braver ses remords. Plus le crime lui coûte à commettre, plus elle aura mérité de

celui qu'elle aime. C'est le fanatisme qui met le poignard aux mains du religieux. (p. 279)

Women's lives are seen to revolve around love, and this serves to portray them as creatures of emotion and sentiment, lacking critical intelligence and therefore easily moved to fanaticism. This statement by the narrator echoes an earlier outburst by Raymon after Indiana has written to him expressing her confidence that he will never allow the two of them to be separated, and will rescue her from her husband:

Exaltation de femme! [...] Les projets romanesques, les entreprises périlleuses flattent leur faible imagination, comme les aliments amers réveillent l'appétit des malades. (p. 203)

The linking of women to imagination and to those who are ill sets them apart from healthy and intelligent masculinity. Women, the narrator declares, lack the critical judgement that grounds the superiority of the male sex:

La femme est imbécile par nature; il semble que, pour contrebalancer l'éminente supériorité que ses délicates perceptions lui donnent sur nous, le ciel ait mis à dessein dans son cœur une vanité aveugle, une idiote crédulité. (p. 251)

Moreover, the narrator states that Indiana is responsible not only for her own oppression, but also for the deficiencies in her husband's character. The misery she suffers in marriage is presented as being her own fault:

Indiana était la victime [des] ennuis [de son mari], et il y avait [...] beaucoup de sa propre faute. Si elle eût élevé la voix, si elle se fût plainte avec affection, mais avec énergie, Delmare, qui n'était que brutal, eût rougi de passer pour méchant. [...] Une femme de l'espèce commune eût dominé cet homme d'une trempe vulgaire; [...] elle l'eût caressé et trompé. (pp. 207-08)

This passage emphasises the possibility that Indiana, as an individual, could change her husband to be less authoritarian, and implies that because she has not done this, she is responsible for Delmare's character. This explanation of the personality of a character who is perhaps the most unpleasant in the novel, hides a sub-text of misogyny which seeks to blame the inferiority of a particular man on a woman's



behaviour. It contrasts with the presentation of Madame Cardonnet in *Le Péch  de Monsieur Antoine*:

Elle offrait [. . .] dans sa personne l' trange anachronisme d'une femme de nos jours, capable de raisonner et de sentir, mais ayant fait sur elle-m me l'effort insens  de r trograder de quelques milliers d'ann es pour se rendre toute semblable   une de ces femmes de l'antiquit  qui mettaient leur gloire   proclamer l'inf riorit  de leur sexe.

Ce qu'il y avait de bizarre et de triste en ceci, c'est qu'elle n'en avait point la conviction, et qu'elle agissait ainsi, disait-elle tout bas, pour avoir la paix. Et elle ne l'avait point! Plus elle s'immolait, plus son ma tre s'ennuyait d'elle. [. . .] Son cerveau s' tait amoindri dans l'esclavage, et son  poux, ne comprenant pas que c' tait l  l'ouvrage de sa domination, en  tait venu   la d daigner secr tement.<sup>17</sup>

In this case, the husband is seen to be responsible for his wife's submission and for the effects this has on her personality. The negative aspect of his character is highlighted, as he comes to despise this woman, not understanding the role he has played in making her what she now is. This example from another of Sand's novels confirms the bias of the narrator of *Indiana*, for unlike the narrator of *Le P    de Monsieur Antoine*, he does not focus on the psychological effects of oppression on the female character, and how this in fact perpetuates her oppression. The reader is, I think, meant to react against this analysis of the relationship between Indiana and Delmare, and see it as revealing some of the narrator's prejudices. His authority is further undermined when Indiana does challenge her husband, and in so doing confronts the power base of society, for Delmare simply replies by affirming his authority: 'Qui donc est le ma tre ici [. . .]? Pr tendez-vous m' ter la barbe du menton? Cela vous sied bien, femmelette!' (p. 232). Indiana cannot be held responsible for her own oppression or for the character of her husband, and the narrator's argument to the contrary provides further proof of the patriarchal perspective underpinning his narrative.

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<sup>17</sup> George Sand, *Le P    de Monsieur Antoine* (Meylan:  ditions de l'Aurore, 1982), p. 154.

The attitudes expressed by the narrator of *Indiana* concerning women are clearly to be read as those of a patriarchal male, insofar as they betray a conception of femininity which is constructed around notions of love, emotion, weakness (of both body and mind) and passivity, and in which women are both inferior to, and dependent on, men. This narrative discourse on gender constituted one of the factors which betrayed for Gustave Planche 'la touche d'une main de femme' behind both the signature G. Sand (the G. only became George with the publication of Sand's third novel *Lélia*), for he argues that 'un homme n'aurait jamais consenti [. . .] à dire cet aphorisme brutal: La femme est imbécile par nature'.<sup>18</sup> But such attitudes also uncover the means by which male superiority in society is constructed, since the narrator's ideology of sexual difference is based on a binary opposition in which femininity becomes an inverted and negative reproduction of masculinity. This is a process which Irigaray analyses in Freud's writing:

Prisonnier lui-même d'une certaine économie du logos, il définit la différence sexuelle en fonction de l'a priori du Même [. . .]. Partie prenante d'une «idéologie» qu'il ne remet pas en cause, il affirme que le «masculin» est le modèle sexuel.<sup>19</sup>

As a result, Irigaray argues, 'le «féminin» est toujours décrit comme défaut, atrophie, revers du seul sexe qui monopolise la valeur: le sexe masculin' (p. 68). By similarly representing the narrator's construction of femininity as the negative of masculinity, and as dependent on the male subject's valorising gaze, Sand allows the reader to glimpse the misogynistic nature of such ideologies of sexual difference.

If the narrator portrays women as inferior, it is tempting to posit that the corresponding presentation of the principal male character is positive. Godwin-Jones points to the narrator's tendency to justify Raymon's actions, and, whilst arguing that the reader is led to react sceptically to such remarks, notes 'the narrator's evocation of Raymon's positive side', 'the narrator's justifying remarks' and his 'praise of

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<sup>18</sup> Gustave Planche, 'Georges Sand', *Revue des deux mondes* (30th November, 1832), pp. 637-702 (p. 700).

<sup>19</sup> Irigaray, *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un*, p. 70.

Raymon's qualities'.<sup>20</sup> This is, however, a misleading representation of the position the narrator adopts towards Raymon, for although the discourse surrounding Raymon often appears positive, it is neither wholly uncritical, nor is its overall effect to affirm the superiority of his character. Indeed, the mixture of justification and ironic criticism concerning Raymon makes this aspect of narrative discourse particularly difficult to pin down. I would suggest, however, that there is a coherence in what the narrator says about Raymon, and that his presentation of this character is indeed partial and influenced by factors relating to gender, politics and literary convention.

Particularly towards the beginning of the novel, the narrator seems to present Raymon in a favourable light, and points to his position in society, the way he dazzled on the social stage, his devotion to his mother and his involvement in politics. At one point, he sums up Raymon's character in these words: 'à tout prendre, c'était, avec ses fautes et ses écarts de jeunesse, un homme supérieur dans la société' (p. 128). Although his faults are mentioned, these are not presented as being serious, and certainly do not detract from his standing in society (of which more later). A clear distinction can therefore be drawn between Raymon's imperfections and those of women, for the latter's are seen to be inherent, natural and thus not susceptible to change ('la femme est imbécile *par nature*', p. 251, my italics).

The narrator's comments on Raymon's actions at the beginning of the novel are particularly defensive: it is as if the narrator is constantly trying to counter the reader's anticipated reaction. The first major section of narrative devoted to Raymon is typical in this regard, and serves to justify his attraction to Noun, Indiana's *femme de chambre*. The narrator writes:

Il vous est impossible peut-être de croire que M. Raymon de Ramière, jeune homme brillant d'esprit, de talents et de grandes qualités, accoutumé aux succès de salon [. . .] eût conçu pour la femme de charge d'une petite maison industrielle de la Brie un attachement bien durable. Monsieur de Ramière n'était pourtant ni un fat ni un libertin. (p. 72)

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<sup>20</sup> Godwin-Jones, *Romantic Vision*, p. 19.

However, he continues in a less positive vein:

C'était un homme à principes quand il raisonnait avec lui-même; mais de fougueuses passions l'entraînaient souvent hors de ses systèmes. Alors il n'était plus capable de réfléchir, ou bien il évitait de se traduire au tribunal de sa conscience: il commettait des fautes comme à l'insu de lui-même, et l'homme de la veille s'efforçait de tromper celui du lendemain. (ibid.)

The narrator justifies Raymon's behaviour and argues that he should not be seen as a libertine. Although he then goes on to discuss Raymon's self-delusions, and the fact that as a result of his passionate nature he often acted without thinking, these are not presented as serious faults. The reader may of course perceive them as such, and regard the fact that Raymon does not seem to consider the implications of his behaviour or to have a sense of conscience as serious flaws. But the narrator implicitly encourages a different reaction, and blames Raymon's behaviour on his upbringing and on the social privileges of his class, for Raymon has never had to contain his desires since these have always been satisfied. Furthermore, within the social circle that is Raymon's, he is looked on positively and his errors are forgiven: 'Raymon avait l'art d'être souvent coupable sans se faire haïr, souvent bizarre sans être choquant' (p. 73). The reader, perhaps unfamiliar with such an environment and its codes of behaviour, is invited to react in a similar fashion, and to understand Raymon rather than judge him.

Having defended him against accusations of licentiousness, and now that Raymon's love for Noun is waning, the narrator goes on to explain why it would have been impossible for the two of them to have married:

Vous conviendrez avec lui que ce n'était pas possible, que ce n'eût pas été généreux, qu'on ne lutte point ainsi contre la société, et que cet héroïsme de vertu ressemble à Don Quichotte brisant sa lance contre l'aile d'un moulin. (p. 76)

What one might perceive as egoistical behaviour is given social justification, and thus legitimised. The narrator justifies many of Raymon's actions in this way, using maxims of human behaviour to show that what he does conforms both to social expectations and to human nature. When Noun first writes to Raymon, he does not

read the letter, but instead throws it into the fire 'dans la crainte de rougir de lui-même' (p. 77). The narrator comments: 'Que voulez-vous, encore une fois! ceci est un préjugé de l'éducation, et l'amour-propre est dans l'amour comme l'intérêt personnel est dans l'amitié' (ibid.). This maxim serves to exonerate Raymon from charges of egoism for the way he has acted is supposedly 'normal'.

Later in the narrative, after Noun's suicide, we are told that Raymon's first reaction was an honourable one, in that guilt drove him to consider committing suicide himself. But we learn that this was only a passing emotion:

Ne croyez [. . .] pas qu'il ait été insensible à la perte de Noun. Dans le premier moment, il se fit horreur à lui-même, et chargea des pistolets dans l'intention bien réelle de brûler la cervelle; mais un sentiment louable l'arrêta. Que deviendrait sa mère... sa mère âgée, débile!... cette pauvre femme [. . .] qui ne vivait plus que pour lui, son unique bien, son seul espoir? Fallait-il briser son cœur, abrégé le peu de jours qui lui restaient? Non, sans doute. La meilleure manière de réparer son crime, c'était de se consacrer désormais uniquement à sa mère. (pp. 127-28)

The narrator appears to approve of Raymon's decision, and the lack of distance between him and his character at this stage in the novel is underlined by the use of *style indirect libre* in this passage. Paradoxically, this also opens up the possibility of a more critical perception of Raymon and of his attempts at covering over the self-interest that might be seen to dictate his behaviour. A gap is opened up between the narrator's discourse and what one might perceive as the 'reality' of Raymon's motivations, and this creates the conditions for viewing the narrator's comments as ironic.

If irony is at work here, it would appear to be irony at the narrator's expense, with an implicit criticism of his naivety in believing that Raymon's actions were indeed motivated by this 'sentiment louable'. However, in the pages which follow, the narrator treats Raymon with marked irony and highlights both his self-delusion and the self-interest which grounds his political beliefs. When the narrator presents Raymon as 'un homme supérieur dans la société' (p. 128), the information he

provides to back up this assertion suggests that such social superiority is to be viewed negatively. The narrator presents Raymon as an influential man in society:

Il est temps de vous apprendre que ce Raymon, dont vous venez de suivre les faiblesses et de blâmer peut-être la légèreté, est un des hommes qui ont eu sur vos pensées le plus d'empire ou d'influence, quelle que soit aujourd'hui votre opinion. (ibid.)

This influence is seen to rest on Raymon's role in politics, and particularly the power of his political rhetoric. But this position is somewhat undercut as the narrator goes on to discuss the political world in which self-interest dominates, and to expose Raymon's ability to distort the truth in writing. Raymon is shown to have 'cette rare faculté [...] de réfuter par le talent la vérité positive' (p. 130), and thus to be precious to 'ce monde élégant et jeune qui voulait bien abjurer les ridicules de ses anciens privilèges, mais qui voulait aussi conserver le bénéfice de ses avantages présents' (ibid.). This world is of course that of Raymon, and it is treated with even more irony in the following remarks: 'C'étaient des hommes d'un grand talent, en effet, que ceux qui retenaient encore la société près de crouler dans l'abîme, et qui, suspendus eux-mêmes entre deux écueils, luttaienent avec calme et aisance contre la rude vérité qui allait les engloutir' (pp. 130-31). The world of politics and political rhetoric is seen to be based on attempts to distort the truth, and the writings of men like Raymon participate in this perverse project. The value attached to the narrator's original statement of Raymon's social superiority becomes rather diminished, and the statement itself can be read as ironic in light of the subsequent presentation of the corruption of the political world which governs society.

However, such overt narrative irony is for the moment confined to Raymon's political beliefs, and the narrator's comments on Raymon's behaviour in love are of a different type. One can note in this context the narrative commentary on Raymon's reaction when Indiana demands that his love for her should be serious:

Ce n'était pas la première fois que Raymon voyait une femme prendre l'amour au sérieux, quoique ces exemples soient rares, heureusement pour la société; mais il savait que les promesses d'amour n'engagent par [sic] l'honneur, heureusement encore pour la société. (p. 148)



Raymon, who acts according to a masculine code of honour, is not criticised for treating love lightly, even if Indiana demands a different type of relationship. Furthermore, the fact that women in general are seen to collaborate in this 'game', may be read as a means of lessening the blame which the reader might attach to Raymon's behaviour, for it is Indiana who is, so to speak, not playing by the rules. Given the narrator's unfavourable comments on this society a few pages earlier, there is scope for reading his comments on the underpinnings of social stability as being tinged with irony, and hence critical of Raymon. However, it is important to bear in mind that we are no longer dealing with the political side to society, but with factors related to gender. Read as part of the narrator's pronouncements on gender, and gender roles in society, the above remarks scarcely seem out of place. They simply reinforce the perception that the narrator stands by the gender hierarchies that underlie society, and accepts certain expectations regarding women's behaviour. Their ironic potential is thus diminished, and as a result Raymon's behaviour does not appear to be called into question.

There does, however, come a point in the novel when the narrator's explanations of Raymon's behaviour become both less frequent and less favourable, and this is especially noticeable later after the central scene in Indiana's bedchamber when she confronts him with her suspicions about his role in Noun's suicide. The narrator changes position from being Raymon's defender to recognising his faults, and the maxims which had previously been invoked to account for his behaviour make way for remarks which undercut Raymon's position. This change in the narrative perspective on Raymon seems to be related to the fact that during the bedchamber scene he falls out of love with Indiana. We are told: '*cet amour avait bien diminué. Il aimait les obstacles, mais il reculait devant les ennuis, et il en prévoyait d'innombrables, maintenant qu'Indiana avait le droit des reproches*' (p. 199). As Indiana now has material with which to castigate him, his superiority in the relationship is challenged, and he can no longer rely on her to reflect a valorising gaze back onto him. But what becomes particularly reprehensible in Raymon's relationship

with Indiana is that he now seeks to enact a revenge which will reaffirm his domination over her:

Il ne s'agissait plus pour lui de conquérir un bonheur, mais de punir un affront; de posséder une femme, mais de la réduire. Il jura qu'il serait son maître, ne fût-ce qu'un jour, et qu'ensuite il l'abandonnerait pour avoir le plaisir de la voir à ses pieds. (p. 200)

When Indiana comes to his house to seek his protection from her husband, Raymon feels that 'le moment était venu de dompter cet orgueil de femme' (p. 219). He decides to seduce her, and then, having duped her, decides that it is time to finish. The narrator describes his actions as characterised by '[le] vice égoïste et froid' (p. 221). As a hero in love, Raymon's egotism was passed over. Now, however, it is exposed and condemned, for it also reveals the threat of violence which underlies the patriarchal system, and which must remain implicit, since to expose it is to reduce the supremacy of the rational male to a mere question of physical strength, and thus to challenge the legitimacy of a society organised in this way. To preserve the myth of a society organised around the innate qualities of the two sexes, such violence must be condemned, as indeed it always has been by the narrator whose presentation of Delmare has scarcely been positive.

Assessments of Raymon's character now work to reinforce a perception of him as an egoist, a label the narrator had previously denied. Narrative irony is no longer restricted to Raymon's politics, but is brought to bear on his actions in general. We are told for example: 'Il redevint moral, vertueux et philosophe. Vous verrez pour combien de temps' (p. 207). Later the narrator delivers a heavily ironic assessment of his egoism: 'plus qu'un autre il haïssait l'égoïsme, parce qu'il savait qu'il n'y avait là rien à recueillir pour son bonheur' (p. 263). Raymon's self-delusions are now brought to the fore, whereas in the first part of the novel they had remained implicit.

The narrator's discourse on Raymon, and Raymon's behaviour itself, show that power and authority in society, as in fiction, are to be equated with the phallus. Raymon's behaviour in the private and emotional sphere is judged by the narrator according to a



masculine code which both he and his character to some extent share. But Raymon can also be seen to be judged by a literary code, for in an important passage in the first edition of *Indiana*, the narrator makes the following comments on this character:

Raymon est le modèle des héros de roman; c'est en vain que la justice céleste poursuit un tel homme, elle ne sait où le prendre, il lui échappe sans cesse. [. . .] C'est qu'il sait vivre, c'est que pour lui la vie est une science exacte; c'est qu'il a analysé, étudié, résumé l'art d'être heureux; [. . .] c'est qu'il ne veut pas se dessaisir de la plus petite portion de son bien-être et que tout doit reculer et céder devant la puissante considération de son moi.<sup>21</sup>

This passage, originally included as part of the bedchamber scene between Raymon and Indiana, is one of the first to be openly critical of Raymon's egotism. But it also lays bare a literary code which appears to sanction such male behaviour, and this may also account for the narrator's less critical judgements of Raymon in the early part of the novel, since at this stage in the plot Raymon is the fictional hero in love.

Furthermore, in this passage, the link between society and fiction is clearly affirmed, for Raymon is also portrayed as 'l'homme de la société actuelle, [. . .] l'homme le mieux pénétré de ce qu'elle lui doit et le plus déterminé à lui donner raison pour s'acquitter envers elle' (ibid.). Whilst on one level this supports the presentation of this novel in the preface as a 'reflet [. . .] fidèle' of society (p. 37), it also reveals the masculinist bias underlying realist representation, which cannot ever be a neutral reflection of exterior reality. As the narrator himself makes clear, the ability to manipulate language (and this must surely include the creation of literature) equals power, for language is described as:

Une reine prostituée qui descend et s'élève à tous les rôles, qui se déguise, se pare, se dissimule et s'efface; c'est une plaideuse qui a réponse à tout, qui a toujours tout prévu, et qui prend mille formes pour avoir raison. Le plus honnête des hommes est celui qui pense et agit le mieux, mais le plus puissant est celui qui sait le mieux écrire et parler. (p. 130)

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<sup>21</sup> George Sand, *Indiana*, ed. by Pierre Salomon (Paris: Garnier, 1983), pp. 387-88, *variante c*.

But the power bestowed by language is also depicted as an exclusively male preserve, and the 'truths' thus generated are not gender neutral. As the maxims and judgements of the narrator of *Indiana* are shown to be biased, the effect is not only to highlight the negativity of Raymon's behaviour, but also to call into question the very patriarchal codes that would legitimate such behaviour, and the injustices towards women that they perpetuate. Sand's first novel thus exemplifies Nancy Miller's contention that 'the maxims that pass for the truths of human experience, and the encoding of that experience in literature, are organizations, when they are not fantasies of the dominant culture'.<sup>22</sup>

It is not implausible to see at work in *Indiana* a variant of *mimétisme* or mimicry, a textual process which Irigaray proposes as a means of subverting patriarchal discourse. She writes:

Jouer de la mimésis, c'est donc, pour une femme, tenter de retrouver le lieu de son exploitation par le discours, sans s'y laisser simplement réduire. C'est se resoumettre [...] à des «idées», notamment d'elle, élaborées dans/par une logique masculine, mais pour faire «apparaître», par un effet de répétition ludique, ce qui devait rester occulté: le recouvrement d'une possible opération du féminin dans le langage. C'est aussi «dévoiler» le fait que si les femmes miment si bien, c'est qu'elles ne se résorbent pas simplement dans cette fonction. *Elles restent aussi ailleurs.* (p. 74, italics in original)

Naomi Schor elucidates Irigaray's theory by proposing three levels of mimicry, of which the second level corresponds to the narrative strategy I have identified in *Indiana*:

In the specific context of feminism the old mimesis, sometimes referred to as masquerade, names women's alleged talents at parroting the master's discourse, including the discourse of misogyny. At a second level, parroting becomes parody, and mimesis signifies not a deluded masquerade, but a canny mimicry.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Nancy Miller, 'Emphasis Added: Plots and Plausibilities in Women's fiction', in *The New Feminist Criticism*, ed. by Elaine Showalter (London: Virago, 1986), pp. 339-60 (p. 357).

<sup>23</sup> Naomi Schor, 'This Essentialism Which Is Not One: Coming To Grips with Irigaray', *differences*, 1.2 (1989), 38-58 (p. 48).

Since *mimétisme* or mimicry involves reproducing the discourse of patriarchy in such a way as to undermine its authority, it is possible to read the misogynistic narrative discourse of *Indiana* through this theory. The novel is not therefore simply a parroting of patriarchal attitudes on women through the use of a male narrator, it is a 'canny mimicry' of these attitudes which subverts the male narrative voice. By the use of a 'mimetic' narrative voice, Sand is able to quote from the male ordering of things and also reveal its flaws. The narrator's presentation of characters, his judgements of their actions and his extrarepresentational acts (particularly his discourse on women) expose his attachment to certain gender norms and hence the gender ideology that grounds representation and society. By dint of repetition, the narrative commentary does not acquire added authority, but instead this repetition forces a critical evaluation of the basis for its claims to truth. This use of mimicry undermines the neutrality of the narrative position and deprives patriarchal metalanguage of its claim to Absolute Truth.

The conclusion of *Indiana* continues this subversion of the authority and neutrality claimed by the narrative persona of the novel, but adds an extra level of complexity. In this part of the novel the narrator becomes an actant on a diegetic level, whom Ralph describes as being a 'conscience naïve et pure que n'a pas salie le monde' (p. 342). If the youth and naivety of a narrator can be seen as markers of potential unreliability, as indeed Rimmon-Kenan suggests (p. 100), this narrator's apparent sympathy for Indiana and Ralph, and the welcome they extend him, not only link him with these characters but also seem to affirm a bond between them. We are thus faced with a narrator who, as a character, appears rather more positive than his previous presentation of the story, and my analysis of the ideology underlying this, would suggest. This has led Françoise van Rossum-Guyon to contend that the appearance of the narrator in the conclusion signals a change in attitude on his part towards the two main characters. She writes:

Cette transformation de son statut narratif n'est pas sans importance. Elle correspond, en effet, à une transformation de son attitude vis-à-vis des acteurs de l'histoire, en particulier de Ralph.<sup>24</sup>

This is, however, to assume that the story had been written by the time of this meeting, which cannot be the case, for the narrator only hears it from Ralph in the conclusion. We must therefore assume that the telling of the story post-dates the narrator's visit to Bernica, which was not, he tells us, occasioned by a desire to meet with Ralph and Indiana, but by a fortuitous encounter on a journey motivated by his wish to 'aller rêver dans les bois sauvages de l'île Bourbon' (p. 331). As a result, there is no immediate reason why his sympathy for Ralph and Indiana should not influence his telling of the story.

Robert-Godwin Jones suggests that the narrator of the conclusion should be seen as separate from that of the rest of the novel. Analysing the different narrative perspective of the conclusion, he writes:

Are we to understand that this is the same narrator who has told the story in the third person? [. . .] If we assume this is the same person, we must take the novel to be his version of the story as he had heard it from Ralph and Indiana; in other words he is reporting the story after his meeting with the two lovers and after he has become their friend. Should we view then the way in which the third-person narrator tells the story as a strategy on his part to keep the ending (the 'real' Ralph and his union with Indiana) in suspense? [. . .] I would argue that these ambiguities are solved by viewing the first-person and third-person narrators as distinct; there is no evidence in the text that they are necessarily one and the same.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike Godwin-Jones, I would posit that first- and third-person narrators are indeed one and the same, for the narrator writes in the conclusion that 'sir Ralph [. . .] me raconta son histoire jusqu'à l'endroit où *nous l'avons laissée* dans le précédent chapitre' (p. 339, my italics). However, this still leaves unresolved the problem of how the narrator's apparent sympathy for Ralph and Indiana becomes transmuted into

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<sup>24</sup> Françoise van Rossum-Guyon, 'A propos d'*Indiana*: la Préface de 1832. Problèmes du métadiscours', in *George Sand: Colloque de Cerisy*, ed. by Simone Vierre (Paris: CDU/SEDES, 1983), pp. 71-83 (p. 78).

<sup>25</sup> Godwin-Jones, *Romantic Vision*, p. 303, note 15.

a negative and distant attitude in his telling of the story. In this context, 'La Marquise', a novella by Sand which was published in December 1832, serves as a useful intertext. In this short story the young male narrator also reacts sympathetically to the story told to him, but his narrative suggests that, although affected on an emotional level, this has not had repercussions on an intellectual level.

As a framed narrative, this novella not only includes the story of the marquise's love for the actor L  lio, but also the circumstances in which the marquise told it to the young narrator. This allows for the presentation of the conflict of opinion between the marquise and the narrator which both occasions and punctuates the telling of the story. In her narrative, the marquise challenges the narrator's understanding of matters relating specifically to women in love, and more generally his preconceptions about life in the eighteenth century. When discussing the prevalence of love affairs between people of different classes, the narrator comments: 'j' ai ou   dire que ces unions disproportionn  es n'  taient pas rares, m  me dans le temps o   les pr  jug  s avaient le plus de force en France'.<sup>26</sup> Although the marquise contradicts this view and argues that 'ces choses-l     taient aussi r  voltantes au temps o   elles se pass  rent qu'au temps o   vous les lisez' (p. 59), he refuses to accept her authority and comments: 'je ne sais lequel de nous deux   tait comp  tent pour juger la question' (ibid.). These preconceptions about the previous century also apply to the women of the period and thus colour the young narrator's view of the marquise. Although he acknowledges on the first page of the story that 'elle d  truisait absolument toutes les id  es que je m'  tais faites d'une marquise du bon temps' (p. 45), he insists on presenting her as an exception to the behaviour of the period, rather than call his own beliefs into question. What sets the marquise apart for him is the fact that '[elle] avait eu peu d'aventures' (p. 47). Like the narrator of *Indiana* who writes that 'l'amour, c'est la vertu de la femme' (p. 279), the young narrator of 'La Marquise' seems to subscribe to the view that women's lives are ruled by love, and he finds it strange that the marquise never met a man who inspired in her feelings of true love, and that her

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<sup>26</sup> George Sand, 'La Marquise', in *Nouvelles* (Paris: Des femmes, 1986), pp. 58-59. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.

'aversion farouche' (p. 57) towards men was never overcome. He thus begins his narrative firm in the belief that 'ce cœur-là n'avait point connu de jeunesse, et [. . .] la froideur de l'égoïsme avait dominé toute autre faculté' (p. 47). When the marquise begins her confession of the one love affair of her life, his reaction of surprise leads her to say:

Oh! cela vous étonne bien d'apprendre qu'une marquise du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle n'ait eu dans toute sa vie qu'un amour et un amour platonique! C'est que, voyez-vous mon enfant, vous autres jeunes gens, vous croyez bien connaître les femmes, et vous n'y entendez rien. Si beaucoup de vieilles de quatre-vingts ans se mettaient à vous raconter franchement leur vie, peut-être découvririez-vous dans l'âme féminine des sources de vice et de vertu dont vous n'avez pas l'idée. (p. 58)

The behaviour of the young narrator of this text will serve as an illustration of this observation. The story of the marquise's love for the actor Lelio seems designed to prove that women can love passionately and remain virtuous, that they are capable of an ideal, unrealised love. At the end of her tale, after she has confessed the extent of her desires and the temptation she felt to give in to them, but told him how she resisted the charms of her lover, she says to the narrator: 'Eh bien, croirez-vous désormais à la vertu du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle?' (p. 92). He replies:

Je n'ai point envie d'en douter; cependant, si j'étais moins attendri, je vous dirais peut-être que vous fûtes bien avisée de vous faire saigner ce jour-là. (ibid.)

This remark makes it clear that whilst he is moved by this account of the marquise's virtue and would like to see it as typical of the century, his rational side believes that the source of such virtue lies in the fact that the marquise had herself bled on the day that she was to meet Lelio. It was this which, in his opinion, relieved her desire and made for the virtuous outcome to her 'love affair'. In the final analysis, the narrator clings to his beliefs not only about women but also about the eighteenth century, and shows that he has not been influenced by what the marquise has said. The story thus ends on the following comment by the marquise: 'Misérables hommes! [. . .] vous ne comprenez rien à l'histoire du cœur' (p. 92). In her eyes, men understand nothing about love, particularly women's experience of it. Yet it is men who write about it



and who produce the influential cultural and literary representations of women in love. However, by telling her own, different story, the marquise saps some of the male narrator's authority.

If the young narrator of 'La Marquise' admits to being 'attendri', this does not prevent him from remaining intellectually detached from the narrative he has just heard, and attached to the prejudices and preconceptions which he held at the outset of the story. It would seem that although he has been moved emotionally, his head has not been similarly affected. The same may perhaps be said of the narrator of *Indiana* who, after hearing Ralph's story, describes himself as having 'les yeux mouillés de larmes' (p. 342), but who nonetheless voices a number of the objections raised by society concerning Ralph and Indiana's behaviour. In so doing, the narrator reveals his own attachment to these social codes, which stress the importance of 'l'opinion' (p. 343) and which condemn those who exile themselves from society. And given that it is to this society that the narrator returns at the end of the conclusion, it is perhaps less surprising that the subsequent narrative, dominated by the head rather than the heart, should be marked by such an adherence to the values of society, and that it should highlight the otherness of Ralph in this society.

In this context, one can usefully stress the narrator's own feeling of otherness in the conclusion, for this space in the novel opposes the value system which he represents and which permeates his narrative. I would suggest that not only do the values represented by the community of Bernica stand against those of patriarchal society, but that they also signal to some extent an emergence of the feminine. This being the case, it is possible to argue that it illustrates the third level of mimesis that Schor identifies in Irigaray's works. She writes: 'mimesis comes to signify difference as positivity, a joyful reappropriation of the attributes of the other that is not in any way to be confused with a mere reversal of the phallogentric division of power'.<sup>27</sup> As a feminine space, existing beyond the structures of patriarchal society, the conclusion of

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<sup>27</sup> Schor, 'This Essentialism Which Is Not One', p. 48.



the novel falls outside the limited perspective of the male narrator, in whose discourse the other is both marginalised and misunderstood. It is therefore only by reading beyond the narrator, by circumventing the authority he claims, that the importance of the conclusion may be understood, and its significance for a feminist reading of the novel realised.

There can be no doubt that the immediate impression created by the conclusion is one of difference. It seems as if everything possible has been done to set the conclusion apart from the main text: not only is it marked as a separate section, but the fact that it is written by a first-person, intradiegetic narrator also sets it apart from the extradiegetic narrative of the rest of the novel. On a thematic level, the description of nature also functions as a marker of difference, for, as Françoise Massardier-Kenney notes, against the lack of description of the Brie region, scene of much of the action in the novel, is set the richness of the description with which the conclusion opens. This emergence of nature, and the importance accorded to it, establishes a contrast with the social and cultural which dominated the previous sections of the novel, a contrast which is of course underpinned by the opposition man/woman, and hence by the equation of woman and nature. It is this equation which Massardier-Kenney sees as important for the underlying unity of the novel, since she argues that 'les descriptions finales de l'île Bourbon, loin d'être des erreurs, sont le point culminant de cette valorisation de la femme et de ses rapports privilégiés avec l'extérieur'.<sup>28</sup> It is on the link that Massardier-Kenney establishes between the feminine and the conclusion that I should like to expand, for the figuring of this as a feminine space through the natural setting is reinforced by the dominance of water, an element long associated with the feminine.<sup>29</sup> Not only is the landscape described in the opening pages of the conclusion constantly recreated by the storms and floods which are a feature of the local climate,

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<sup>28</sup> Françoise Massardier-Kenney, 'Indiana: Lieux et personnages féminins', *Nineteenth Century French Studies*, 19 (1990), 65-71 (p. 66).

<sup>29</sup> See for instance Gaston Bachelard's study *L'Eau et les rêves* (Paris: José Corti, 1942), which establishes an association between water and ideas of maternity and childbirth. My only reservation about Massardier-Kenney's analysis of the link between nature and the character of Indiana, is her rejection of this link made between women and water (p. 68), which I regard as being of central importance.

but also the location of the remote settlement inhabited by Indiana and Ralph underscores the omnipresence and centrality of water, given that it is situated beside ‘une cataracte furieuse [qui] se précipitait dans le fond d’un ravin, et y formait un lac débordé’ (p. 333). The narrator too perceives this landscape as having feminine elements, and his description of it is marked by images of the feminine. He speaks, for example, of ‘le ventre de la montagne’, ‘une muraille [. . .] *dentelée et brodée*’ and ‘de *magiques* élaborations [qui] ont *enfanté* l’idée de la sculpture moresque’ (pp. 331-32, my italics). Tangible feminine images of childbirth, lace and embroidery combine with the idea of magic, which is also associated with the feminine because of its opposition to rational science. This is not a reassuringly static and unified landscape, but instead menacing in its dynamism, and characterised for the narrator by an ‘épouvantable confusion’ (p. 331) and a ‘diabolique opération’ (p. 332), which emphasise its difference and its otherness, in which he feels ill at ease. Nature here does not conform to the traditional masculine, literary (Romantic) conception of the term, in which it was a source of truth or inspiration, or a reflection of the male artist’s subjectivity. Here the feminine otherness of nature resists such enclosure within the patriarchal scheme, for if static and beautiful landscapes may delight the male imagination, female characters find no solace there, as the eponymous heroine of Sand’s third novel, *Lélia*, discovers. She writes of her time in the wilderness, away from society: ‘Oui, je détestais cette nature radieuse et magnifique, car elle se dressait là, devant moi, comme une beauté stupide qui se tient muette et fière sous le regard des hommes et croit avoir assez fait en se montrant’.<sup>30</sup> This landscape does not produce a positive reaction in *Lélia*, for it seems to seek only the valorising male gaze. In the 1839 version of the novel, however, she identifies with a natural setting, which, in its dynamism, recalls the description of the île Bourbon in the conclusion of *Indiana*. In the chapter entitled ‘Contemplation’, *Lélia* refers to ‘une vaste enceinte de ruines volcaniques [. . .] des murailles naturelles d’une lave rouge qu’on prendrait pour de la brique, les gigantesques cristallisations de basalte et, partout, sur les minéraux, les étincelles et les lames d’une pluie de métaux en fusions, que fouetta

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<sup>30</sup> George Sand, *Lélia* (Meylan: Éditions de l’Aurore, 1987), I, 145.

jadis une tempête sortie des entrailles de la terre' (II, 105). If she initially feels uneasy in this chaos, imagining it to be 'la demeure de quelque puissance infernale, ennemie de la paix de l'homme' (ibid.), at dawn when the landscape becomes more distinct, and she is assured that 'le sol était encore féconde, que l'humanité existait encore' (ibid.), the natural setting produces in her an identification with humanity, and a desire to create 'un rapport sympathique de l'homme à l'homme, au milieu des abîmes de l'espace' (II, 106). This, it would seem, is a more truly feminine nature, one which responds to Lélia's needs, for in nature she does not seek self-centred immersion, but instead a source of energy for creating bonds with others. It is this dynamism of nature, this force that cannot be contained, which properly represents the difference of the feminine, as evoked by Luce Irigaray:

[Femme] Tu bouges. Tu ne restes jamais tranquille. Tu ne restes jamais. [...] Demeurant dans le flux, sans jamais le figer. Le glacer. Comment faire passer dans les mots ce courant? Multiple. [...] Ces mouvements que le parcours d'un point d'origine à une fin ne décrit pas. Ces fleuves, sans mer unique et définitive. Ces rivières sans rives persistantes. Ce corps sans bords arrêtés. Cette mobilité, sans cesse. Cette vie. [...] Tant tout cela reste étrange à qui prétend se fonder sur du solide.<sup>31</sup>

By insisting on its otherness, based on the fluid and dynamic, Irigaray posits that the feminine remains beyond the grasp of the masculine which is founded on the solid. In this context, the reaction of the narrator in the conclusion to the natural setting of the île Bourbon assumes its full significance, for this male representative of society, who in the rest of the novel comments with authority on characters and events, is disconcerted by the lack of fixity in this natural, feminine setting, by the lack of oppositions and hierarchies which guarantee order and stability. Gone are the maxims which justified and explained the behaviour of various characters, to be replaced in the conclusion by a proliferation of 'sans doute', 'peut-être', 'paraître' and 'sembler' (pp. 331-39, *passim*). This lack of fixity and 'meaning' is further highlighted by the narrator's reaction to a rock formation which he imagines to be covered with hieroglyphs:

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<sup>31</sup> Irigaray, *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un*, p. 214.

Je m'arrêtai au pied d'une cristallisation basaltique, haute d'environ soixante pieds [ . . . ] Au front de ce monument étrange, une large inscription semblait avoir été tracée par une main immortelle. Ces pierres volcaniques offrent souvent le même phénomène. Jadis leur substance, amollie par l'action du feu, reçut, tiède et malléable encore, l'empreinte des coquillages et des lianes qui s'y collèrent. De ces rencontres fortuites sont résultés des *jeux bizarres*, des impressions hiéroglyphiques, des caractères *mystérieux*, qui semblent jetés là comme le seing d'un être *surnaturel*, écrit en lettres *cabalistiques*.

Je restai longtemps dominé par la *puérile* prétention de chercher un sens à ces chiffres inconnus. (pp. 332-33, *my italics*)

The informed and confident discourse on these volcanic rock formations contrasts with the uncertainty of his discussion of the hieroglyphs, and opposes these supernatural and mysterious signs to scientific knowledge. The hieroglyphs fall outside the bounds of rational thought and add to the atmosphere of strangeness and otherness that characterise the narrator's descriptions in this part of the novel. Yet the narrator, in his desire to impose the centrality of his imagination on the landscape, would like to understand them, and his inability to do so leads him to reject the possibility of them having any meaning, and to refer to his initial desire to interpret them as 'puéril'. The language used here by the narrator merits comment, for it shows that whatever exists beyond rational thought can only, in the eyes of a representative of the patriarchal order, be unimportant and inferior. The narrator's reaction to what is 'other' thus echoes that of Delmare and Raymon to what Indiana says in the main part of the novel, for her ideas are repeatedly dismissed as fantasy, alien to a patriarchal code grounded in reason and reality. Delmare, for instance says to her: 'Taisez-vous, sotte et impertinente créature; *vos phrases de roman* nous ennuiant' (p. 232). He accuses Indiana of finding her ideas in novels, of having a romanesque conception of life which has nothing to do with reality, and therefore dismisses what she says. The romanesque and the ideal are constantly dismissed by those who claim to speak with authority and in the name of reason. That the narrator's reaction to otherness in the conclusion should, in its dismissive tone and disparagement of the fantastical, of what is beyond reason, mirror so closely patriarchy's reaction to the female other in the novel not only heightens the link between femininity and this uncontained, menacing otherness of the conclusion, but

also brings the character of Indiana into the equation. It is around this character that the hidden structure of the novel is organised, since she forms the essential link between that which is portrayed as other or different in the main part of the novel, and the space of difference that the conclusion represents. Bernica, it seems to me, is figured as Indiana's space and it has been prepared in the course of the novel by the frequently-dismissed words and dreams of the heroine.

Isabelle Naginski points out that Indiana's speech can be described as either resisting, as when she refuses to accept her husband's authority, or submissive, as when she gives herself entirely to Raymon out of love for him. She begins to fashion what Naginski calls an 'authentic discourse'<sup>32</sup> only late in the novel, when she writes a forceful letter to Raymon. In this letter, Indiana speaks out against the importance of public opinion in society and its conception of religion, and in the course of this implicitly denounces phallogocentric discourse in which language is equated with male power.

Indiana's first explicit objection is to the power of society and the importance of reputation, which is dependent on public opinion. She had been prepared to defy opinion and leave her husband to live with Raymon, but Raymon proved to lack the courage necessary for such a move, which would also have severed his links with society. What she writes to Raymon prepares the ending in which she and Ralph exist outside society:

Comme je les aurais défiées, alors, ces lointaines rumeurs d'un monde impuissant à me nuire! comme j'aurais bravé la haine, forte de votre affection! [. . .] Un mot de vous, un regard, un baiser aurait suffi pour m'absoudre, et le souvenir des hommes et des lois n'eût pas pu trouver sa place dans une pareille vie. (p. 247)

Indiana here places true love and affection over the rules of society and indicates that with this love she would be prepared to stand up to society. This seclusion, indeed self-exclusion, from society is realised in the conclusion, where the laws and opinions

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<sup>32</sup> Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for Her Life*, p. 73.

of masculine society have no place, for the community created at Bernica stands apart from them. Indeed, Bernica stands in opposition to all the laws and values of society and therefore against the basis of public opinion. Ralph says to the narrator at the end of the novel:

Quant à l'opinion, monsieur, à voir ceux qu'elle élève, ne faudrait-il pas toujours tendre la main à ceux qu'elle foule aux pieds? On la dit nécessaire au bonheur; ceux qui le croient doivent la respecter. Pour moi, je plains sincèrement tout bonheur qui s'élève ou s'abaisse à son souffle capricieux. (p. 343)

Ralph here echoes Indiana's previous rejection of public opinion and goes further, in that he is not only indifferent to it, but also actively rejects its validity, reversing the hierarchies it establishes. The conclusion therefore completes the position on 'l'opinion' adopted earlier in the novel by the heroine.

Indiana's views on religion, expounded in this same letter, are also of relevance for the conclusion. She rejects the patriarchal base of the Christian (Catholic) Church in favour of a religion more closely tied to nature, and writes to Raymon: 'je ne sers pas le même Dieu [que vous], mais je le sers mieux, et plus purement. Le vôtre, c'est le dieu des hommes, c'est le roi, le fondateur et l'appui de votre race; le mien, c'est le Dieu de l'univers, le créateur, le soutien et l'espoir de toutes les créatures' (p. 249). Indiana's conception of God, outside the patriarchal structures of the Church, which is seen to uphold the values of society, is realised at the end of the novel when nature becomes her cathedral. That Bernica is the realisation of such a religion is also given credence by Ralph when he suggests to Indiana that they commit suicide there, and says to Indiana: 'Pour nous, l'univers est le temple où nous adorons Dieu. C'est au sein d'une nature grande et vierge qu'on retrouve le sentiment de sa puissance, pure de toute profanation humaine. Retournons au désert afin de pouvoir prier' (p. 307).

In her letter to Raymon, Indiana also speaks out against the links between the Church and the society which it upholds, a society in which she feels oppressed. Church and society share the same values, and the discourse of religion is used to ensure that these values are adhered to. Indiana seems to imply in what she writes that this



discourse is used, or indeed abused, by patriarchal society to ensure the continuation of male domination: 'toute votre morale, tous vos principes, ce sont les intérêts de votre société que vous avez érigés en lois et que vous prétendez faire émaner de Dieu même [. . .]. Mais tout cela est mensonge et impiété. [. . .] Allez, il vous sied mal d'invoquer son nom pour anéantir la résistance d'une faible femme, pour étouffer la plainte d'un cœur déchiré' (p. 249). Patriarchal society places God at the origin of its laws and uses his name to quash resistance. Indiana rejects the validity of these laws, arguing that a God who is just could not approve of them, and she speaks out in the name of all those who have been oppressed and who have suffered:

Dieu ne veut pas qu'on opprime et qu'on écrase les créatures de ses mains. S'il daignait descendre dans nos chétifs intérêts, il briserait le fort et relèverait le faible; il passerait sa grande main sur nos têtes inégales et les nivellerait comme les eaux de la mer; il dirait à l'esclave: «Jette ta chaîne, et fuis sur les monts où j'ai mis pour toi des eaux, des fleurs et du soleil.» [. . .] Oui, voilà mes rêves; ils sont tous d'une autre vie, d'un autre monde, où la loi du brutal n'aura point passé sur la tête du pacifique [. . .]. Si j'écoutais la voix que Dieu a mise au fond de mon cœur, [. . .] j'irais vivre pour moi seule au fond de nos belles montagnes; j'oublierais les tyrans, les injustes et les ingrats. (pp. 249-50)

Indiana rejects all oppression and hierarchies, the power of the strong over the weak, and exposes them as having no foundation in religion. Patriarchal society, which had based its legitimacy on God's word, is shown therefore to be an artificial construct, based on the self-interest of those in power and dependent on the repression of all others. And although Indiana uses the phrase 'j'irais vivre pour moi seule' (ibid.), this is not an example of egoism, but rather the expression of her desire to escape a society based on masculine values in order to live according to values closer to her own feminine nature.

The world which Indiana imagines, and which she admits to being a dream, unrealisable within the structures of contemporary society, would be one without oppression, where all would be equal. It is significant that she mentions the freeing of slaves as an important part of this 'new world', for this is a project that she and Ralph undertake in Bernica. The possession of one man by another, the master/slave



relationship where one person has power over another, is banished from the world that Indiana helps to create in the conclusion. In her dreamlike conception of this place she uses a number of images which I have already shown to be characteristic of the conclusion: she speaks of the levelling capacity of water; of a place where slaves could enjoy 'des eaux, des fleurs et du soleil' (ibid.); and she suggests that the place where this authentic religion could be realised is a remote spot in the mountains, away from 'les tyrans, les injustes et les ingrats' (ibid.). In the novel, it is Bernica which represents the fulfilment of this imaginary project which Indiana had nurtured in her own suffering and oppression.

We find similar images in Indiana's dreams. From the opening scene of the novel, Indiana is portrayed as a dreamy character: we are told that 'madame Delmare ne sortit point de sa rêverie' (p. 53), and later she is described as 'cette femme rêveuse' (p. 59). Dreams also form an important part of her life when she is forced to return to the île Bourbon with her husband, and the narrator informs us that: 'Elle vécut ainsi des semaines et des mois sous le ciel des tropiques, n'aimant, ne connaissant, ne caressant qu'une ombre, ne creusant qu'une chimère' (p. 254). This highly-developed inner life is clearly linked to Indiana's oppression, and it becomes a means of escape from an unsatisfactory reality. Indeed, it is on this idea that her dreams seem to focus:

Alors elle ne rêva plus que de fuite, de solitude et d'indépendance; elle roula dans son cerveau meurtri et douloureux mille projets d'établissement romanesque dans les terres désertes de l'Inde ou de l'Afrique. [. . .] Déjà elle construisait son ajoupa solitaire sous l'abri d'une forêt vierge, au bord d'un fleuve sans nom; elle se réfugiait sous la protection de ces peuplades que n'a point flétries le joug de nos lois et de nos préjugés. Ignorante qu'elle était, elle espérait trouver là les vertus exilées de notre hémisphère, et vivre en paix, étrangère à toute constitution sociale [. . .]. Faible femme qui ne pouvait endurer la colère d'un homme, et qui se flattait de braver celle de l'état sauvage. (p. 273)

Although the narrator's disparagement of Indiana's dream is typical of his attitude to women, Indiana's flight into exile, when realised, is not a solitary enterprise. Nor was it always so even in her dreams, for the first of these was centred around love:

Elle s'était habituée à dire: «Un jour viendra où tout sera changé dans ma vie, où je ferai du bien aux autres; un jour où l'on m'aimera, où je donnerai mon cœur à celui qui me donnera le sien; en attendant, souffrons; taisons nous et gardons notre amour pour récompense à qui me délivrera.» (p. 89)

The fact that Indiana's liberation is shown in the novel to be contingent on a man is certainly problematic from a feminist perspective, particularly when the power this affords the man can be abused (as indeed was the case with Raymon). If the presence of Ralph at Bernica, the space of the realisation of Indiana's dreams, can be accepted because he too has been perceived as 'other' by the representatives of the patriarchal order in the novel, and also because of the non-exclusive nature of the feminine economy which the conclusion of *Indiana* inscribes, his dominance is perhaps surprising. There is certainly ample material within the text to argue that this is Ralph's rather than Indiana's space: it is he who twice saves Indiana from almost certain suicide, he who encourages her to return with him to the île Bourbon in order to commit suicide by jumping into the gorge at Bernica, a place where he as a child, and even later as an adult, spent much time. But on a more thematic, even idealistic level, this is still the place of the fulfilment of Indiana's desires, and also the place of the coming together of the male and female others of the novel.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that Ralph controls the dialogue in the conclusion, whilst Indiana is almost totally silent, remains problematic. If this is Indiana's space, there is a justifiable expectation that she be more vocal, especially given the link established in the rest of the novel between repression and silence. But the silence of the conclusion is different, linked not to oppression but to a withdrawal from an alienating masculine language, the distorting power of which has been amply illustrated in the novel through the character of Raymon.

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<sup>33</sup> While the almost total exclusion of Indiana from determining the action of the novel may seem to reinforce certain gender stereotypes, the conclusion of the novel provides an early example of the link between the fulfilment of female desire and idealism, which Naomi Schor argues is a central element of Sand's feminist concerns. In *George Sand and Idealism* she writes: 'Idealism, as appropriated by Sand, signified her refusal to reproduce mimetically and hence to legitimate a social order inimical to the disenfranchised, among them women. Idealism for Sand is finally the only alternative representational mode available to those who do not enjoy the privileges of subjecthood in the real' (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 54.

On another level, the silence of Indiana when Ralph transmits their story to the narrator also emphasises that the female, the other who refuses all compromise with the patriarchal order, is excluded from literary creation and from the transmission of stories, for to participate in the literary project (as Sand was aware) is to silence the feminine, the other, in order to take on the mask of the masculine, of the same. This marginal position of the feminine other in the male literary project is also highlighted by the structural position of the conclusion, the feminine isolated from the main part of the novel. Indeed, the way the narrator presents the conclusion highlights its otherness since he separates it from the main narrative over which he has control and which is both unified and has 'proper' closure. From his literary perspective this is a section of the text which is to be marginalised in the same way as the characters of Indiana and Ralph are marginalised in his narrative.

His is a story built on the repression of the feminine other. Like society, novels too depend for stability and closure on the repression of female desire, or on the appropriation of the feminine other, normally achieved through marriage or death,<sup>34</sup> but the conclusion of *Indiana* subverts this and refuses closure. Whilst the 'first ending' closes under the sign of death with the 'suicide' of Ralph and Indiana, the conclusion reverses this closure and transforms it into an opening out of possibilities for the female protagonist. This rejection of the traditional modalities of closure is clearly deliberate, and aimed to shake the reader's expectations. On one level the imagery of suicide and death, which permeates the novel, prepares for the final death of Indiana and Ralph, thus tying up many of the themes and strands of the plot. However, this ending would have ended female growth and self-realisation, and also have included connotations of the triumph of society over those who have transgressed its laws. *Indiana* could therefore not adequately be concluded in this way, although literary conventions and a certain social morality would seem to

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<sup>34</sup> See for example Naomi Schor, *Breaking the Chain: Women, Theory and French Realist Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) and Rachel Blau Duplessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

demand it. The open and optimistic nature of the conclusion works against the unity of the patriarchal in its challenging of the literary tradition, in the opportunities it affords to the female character beyond the marriage/death model and also in the fulfilment of female desires that it inscribes.

It is this non-conformity to literary or moral norms that may be seen to have earned the conclusion of *Indiana* the label of 'invraisemblable'. 'Vraisemblance' is, Genette argues, the result of respecting these norms:

Ce qui subsiste, et qui définit le vraisemblable, c'est le principe formel de respect de la norme, c'est-à-dire l'existence d'un rapport d'implication entre la conduite particulière attribuée à un tel personnage, et telle maxime générale implicite et reçue; [. . .] comprendre la conduite d'un personnage (par exemple) c'est pouvoir la référer à une maxime admise, et cette référence est reçue comme une remontée de l'effet à la cause.<sup>35</sup>

There can be no maxim to account for the conclusion of *Indiana* since it refuses patriarchal morals ( *Indiana* is not punished for her 'transgressions', as Planche noted in his article)<sup>36</sup> and it falls outside literary norms. It is therefore read as unmotivated and unconvincing. However, this part of the novel links to the discourse and ideology of the female other, personified in the character of *Indiana*, who is marginalised both in patriarchal society and in the patriarchal narrative. Just as the community at Bernica, which is also symbolically marginal to French society, works, by freeing slaves, to subvert the society on the margins of which it exists, so too the conclusion works to subvert the masculine nature and discourse of the novel by its difference, its resistance to unity, its fluidity, its rejection of hierarchies, its open nature, and its disruption of the telos of the masculine narrative. It also inscribes a space which does not simply reverse patriarchal power, but eclipses it and signals an emergence of the feminine.

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<sup>35</sup> Gérard Genette, *Figures II* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969), pp. 74-75.

<sup>36</sup> Gustave Planche wrote of *Indiana*: 'Le livre devait finir au mariage de Raymon. C'était un dénouement sombre, impitoyable [. . .]; l'expiation pour le crime voulu, le châtement terrible pour une faute à laquelle le temps seul avait manqué: le bonheur est de trop dans les dernières pages' (*Revue des deux mondes*, 30th November 1832, p. 695).

As the space in *Indiana* which falls outside the control of the narrator, and which points to another 'story' within the one he is telling, the conclusion contributes to the processes at work in the novel which undercut male narrative authority. It is a space which escapes his understanding and which cannot be fully integrated into a narrative founded on masculine concepts of unity and closure. Moreover, existing under the sign of difference, it can be read as the space which represents an 'elsewhere' to discredited phallogocentric and phallogocentric systems.

With this in mind, the final sentence of the novel assumes its full significance. In it, the narrator reports Indiana and Ralph's final words to him: 'Adieu, me dirent-ils, retournez au monde; si quelque jour il vous bannit, souvenez-vous de notre chaumière indienne' (p. 344). Whilst the reference to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre points the reader towards one of the intertexts present in *Indiana*, the double-voice of these final lines indicates another crucial characteristic of the novel. For Pierrette Daly, this is a particularly negative ending: 'in the last paragraph, she [Indiana] is neutralized, her voice blending with that of her faithful lover in one last greeting. It is the man's voice which ends the novel, Indiana's identity is fused into his, and her voice is stifled'.<sup>37</sup> However, placed in the context of the conclusion and the values it represents, the plural voice becomes an inclusive one which emphasises a new, non-antagonistic relationship between the sexes, and the fact that this is a community based not on the selfish interests of one sex, but in which both sexes are equal 'stakeholders'. As such, it stands against the masculine 'nous' of the narrator which was fundamentally exclusive, and representative of a society constructed around such exclusion. Moreover, the combined voices of Ralph and Indiana point to the double-voiced nature of the whole novel, the subversive presence of the female author behind the male narrator, and the mimicry of masculinity this gives rise to.

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<sup>37</sup> Daly, 'The Problem of Language in George Sand's *Indiana*', p. 25.

(ii) *Men With Something To Prove: 'Horace' and 'Le Dernier Amour'*

We find a similar undermining of male authority in both *Horace* (1841) and *Le Dernier Amour* (1866), the former a homodiegetic, the latter an intradiegetic narrative. Unlike *Indiana*, there is no illusion of narrative neutrality in either of these novels since their narrators are revealed to be male in the opening pages. But whereas factors of unreliability such as personal involvement in the story and limited perspective might be seen to diminish the potential authority or universality of the narrative perspective, here both men lay claim to an authoritative position. Consequently, they present the stories they tell as being of universal interest, since they are intended as illustrations of their opinions on friendship (*Horace*) and adultery (*Le Dernier Amour*). What is more, these two narrators seem to be marked as mouthpieces for the author since there is common ground in their respective value schemes. The extrarepresentational narrative acts in these novels seem therefore to function not as markers of unreliability, establishing a productive distance between implied author and narrator, but as markers of authority which bridge this gap and signal the apparent reliability of these men as narrators. However, in both novels, internal contradictions and the objecting voices of female characters will deprive both men of the authority and neutrality to which they lay claim.

There is much about the narrator of *Horace* which would appear to make of him not only a positive character, but also a trustworthy reporter and interpreter of events. Théophile is educated and believes strongly in the value of education, expresses apparently enlightened views on women's position in society, espouses democratic principles and the cause of the people despite his aristocratic birth, and has even taken a working-class woman as his common-law wife. Based on such a profile, it is not hard to see how he could be linked to the author and hence seen as the perfect narrator. Anna Szabó calls him 'un personnage proche de l'idéal',<sup>38</sup> and links Sand's

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<sup>38</sup> Szabó, *Le Personnage sandien*, p. 29.



choice of him as narrator to the political and social ideas contained in the novel. She writes:

Pour transmettre les idées sociales et politiques exprimées dans *Horace*, l'écrivain avait besoin d'un narrateur susceptible de lui faciliter l'accès au public, de lui assurer une audience aussi large que possible. La figure de Théophile ainsi conçue répond parfaitement à cet objectif. Il est d'abord *homme*, jouissant, surtout à l'époque, de plus de crédit qu'une femme; ensuite fils d'aristocrate, mais adapté aux circonstances nouvelles, son itinéraire social et moral pouvant servir d'exemple. [. . .] Le lecteur, guidé par un narrateur aussi parfait, n'a pas le choix: il n'a qu'à suivre l'exemple à son tour. (p. 30, italics in original)

Despite the advantages Szabó posits for such a narrative form, it was not one which would be adopted for other such novels, and *Horace* is the only of Sand's 'socialist' novels which is narrated in the first-person. There are, I think, good reasons for this, since the narrator of *Horace* is less reliable than his profile would suggest, and this is primarily due to the gender ideology which informs his presentation of the story.

Robert Godwin-Jones, in a perceptive study of *Horace*, signals the unreliability of the narrator, although he argues (erroneously in my opinion) that 'such an narrative approach [. . .] is a rarity among Sand's novels'.<sup>39</sup> His study shows that the narrator of *Horace* is particularly biased in his presentation of the principal male character, and he argues that whilst Horace 'has few admirable qualities', the narrator nonetheless 'makes himself into [his] advocate' (p. 110), and consequently the reader is led to view Théophile's presentation of him 'with suspicion' (p. 112). He concludes that:

By giving her narrator this role, George Sand was in effect warning the reader: do not be so swept away in reading novels that you blindly adopt the views and attitudes embraced by the narrator [. . .] or by the principal characters. Thus [. . .] *Horace* is a novel with an anti-novel message. (p. 121)

There can be little doubt that Théophile's blindspot is Horace, and that his presentation of him shows the bias and also the naiveté of some of his views. But this

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<sup>39</sup> Godwin-Jones, *Romantic Vision*, p. 109.



must, I think, be considered in more general terms. Sand's marking of Théophile as unreliable in his presentation of a character as negative as Horace is not just a warning to readers to be wary about placing faith in the ideas presented by the narrator. It also constitutes an uncovering of the workings of patriarchy both in society and in literature.

It is on the subject of bonds between men that Théophile begins his narrative:

Les êtres qui nous inspirent le plus d'affection ne sont pas toujours ceux que nous estimons le plus. La tendresse du cœur n'a pas besoin d'admiration et d'enthousiasme: elle est fondée sur un sentiment d'égalité qui nous fait chercher dans un ami un semblable, un homme sujet aux mêmes passions, aux mêmes faiblesses que nous. La vénération commande une autre sorte d'affection que cette intimité expansive de tous les instants qu'on appelle l'amitié.<sup>40</sup>

Whereas the use of 'êtres' and 'nous' in the first sentence seems to indicate a universal, inclusive application for the statement to follow, this soon becomes restricted to the masculine 'ami' and 'homme'. Friendship, we are told, is a bond between those who are alike (the emphasis on 'semblable' and 'mêmes'), and particularly a bond between men. Théophile's definition confirms the 'gendered politics of friendship'<sup>41</sup> which Naomi Schor argues is a feature of patriarchal society, and which is based on what Derrida calls the 'double exclusion'<sup>42</sup> of both friendship between women and friendship between men and women. This philosophy, indicated at the outset of the novel, will infuse the narrative and cannot be separated from the narrator's presentation of Horace, for his attitude to this character will not be conditioned by Horace's worth as a person, or by the respect the narrator has for him, but by the bonds of masculinity and sameness which link them. The result is a novel which will inscribe the powerful bonds between men in patriarchal society, and the

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<sup>40</sup> George Sand, *Horace* (Meylan: Éditions de l'Aurore, 1982), p. 27. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.

<sup>41</sup> Schor, *George Sand and Idealism*, p. 134.

<sup>42</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'The Politics of Friendship', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 85 (1988), 632-44 (p. 642), quoted by Schor, p. 134.

male friendship of which the text speaks thus becomes a metaphor for the homosocial relations around which patriarchal society is organised.

The ties which bind these two men are stressed even when Horace's faults are mentioned. Théophile describes him as 'un jeune homme rempli de défauts et de travers, que j'ai même méprisé et haï à de certaines heures, et pour qui cependant j'ai ressenti une des plus puissantes et des plus invincibles sympathies que j'aie jamais connues' (p. 28). This 'sympathie' will inform all that he says about the central male character, for although Théophile admits Horace's faults, he still tries to find positive aspects to him. At one point, whilst admitting that Horace has in the past behaved egoistically, he expresses the hope that love will cure him of this:

Jusqu'ici, me dis-je, il y a eu dans son ambition quelque chose de trop personnel qui lui a montré l'avenir sous un jour d'égoïsme. A présent qu'il aime, son âme va s'ouvrir à des notions plus larges, plus vraies, plus généreuses. Le dévouement va se révéler, et, avec le dévouement, la nécessité et le courage de travailler. (p. 130)

Théophile has exceptional faith in Horace, though what Horace himself says about his feelings suggests that Théophile's belief that love will make him less self-centred is misguided. Horace says to Théophile: 'Au nom du présent, je te supplie de ne pas me parler de l'avenir. J'aime, je suis heureux, je suis enivré, je me sens vivre. Comment et pourquoi veux-tu que je songe à autre chose qu'à ce moment fortuné où j'existe surabondamment?' (pp. 129-30). Some pages later, after Horace has compromised Marthe's reputation by encouraging her to spend the night in his room, Théophile is forced to admit the self-centred nature of Horace's love. But what is more significant here is that the narrator claims sole authority to judge Horace's character accurately and rejects what both Eugénie and Marthe say (though in the final analysis they will be shown to be correct):

Eugénie était injuste; elle ne voyait pas la vérité mieux que Marthe. [...] Horace n'était ni aussi respectable ni aussi méchant qu'elles se l'imaginaient. Le triomphe le rendait volontiers insolent; il avait cela de commun avec tant d'autres, que si on voulait condamner rigoureusement ce travers, il faudrait mépriser et maudire la majeure partie de notre sexe. Mais son cœur n'était ni froid ni dépravé. Il aimait certainement

beaucoup; seulement, l'éducation morale de l'amour lui ayant manqué, ainsi qu'à tous les hommes, comme il n'était pas du petit nombre de ceux dont le dévouement naturel fait exception, il aimait seulement en vue de son propre bonheur, et, si je puis m'exprimer ainsi, pour l'amour de lui-même. (p. 154)

The contradiction with what he had said earlier is evident, but this does not bring him to admit his mistake or to condemn Horace's behaviour. He admits only that he found Horace's 'air de triomphe' to be 'd'assez mauvais goût' (ibid.). When Théophile later discusses different ways of loving, the opportunity for condemning Horace is clear:

Je crois qu'on doit définir passion noble celle qui nous élève et nous fortifie dans la beauté des sentiments et la grandeur des idées; passion mauvaise, celle qui nous ramène à l'égoïsme, à la crainte et à toutes les petitesse de l'instinct aveugle. Toute passion est donc légitime ou criminelle, suivant qu'elle amène l'un ou l'autre résultat, bien que la société officielle, qui n'est pas le vrai consentement de l'humanité, sanctifie souvent la mauvaise en proscrivant la bonne. (p. 167)

Whilst the narrator seems to place himself in a superior position to 'la société officielle' which condones the negative way of loving, his behaviour and attitude towards Horace also place him in this category. He therefore contradicts himself by condoning, even justifying Horace's egoism. This is particularly evident when, towards the end of the novel, he tries to deny this aspect of Horace's character, and in so doing echoes some of the narrative judgements of Raymon in *Indiana*:

A mes yeux (et je crois l'avoir connu aussi bien que possible), Horace n'était pas [. . .] un froid égoïste. Il est bien vrai qu'il était froid; mais il était passionné aussi. Il est bien vrai qu'il avait de l'égoïsme; mais il avait en même temps un besoin d'amitié, de soins et de sympathie qui dénotait bien l'amour des semblables. [. . .] L'égoïste vit seul; Horace ne pouvait vivre un quart d'heure sans société. Il avait de la personnalité, ce qui est bien différent de l'égoïsme. Il aimait les autres par rapport à lui; mais il les aimait, cela est certain, et on eût pu dire sans trop sophistiquer que, ne pouvant s'habituer à la solitude, il préférait l'entretien du premier venu à ses propres pensées, et que, par conséquent, il préférait en un certain sens les autres à lui-même. (p. 221)



Such a distortion of logic and rational argument in favour of a male character indicates that personal allegiances cloud his judgement. It also exposes the partiality of his position, and on a wider level confirms that masculine reason can be used as a means of justifying and perpetuating patriarchy. In the end it is left to Eugénie, who had earlier been presented as not fully understanding Horace, to deliver the most insightful comment on this character when she calls him 'l'homme le plus égoïste et le plus ingrat qui soit au monde' (p. 311). The narrator's reaction is to say to her:

Eugénie, [. . .] ayez de l'indulgence et de la douceur avec Horace, je vous en supplie. Il est fort à plaindre parce qu'il est fort coupable. Vous avez cédé à l'impétuosité de votre cœur en l'accablant tout à l'heure d'un reproche bien grave. Mais ce n'est pas ainsi qu'on doit traiter les infirmités de l'âme. (p. 312)

Théophile's indulgence and bias towards Horace are by now well established, so what is particularly remarkable here is his superior, patronising attitude towards Eugénie. He has already claimed a rather less hierarchical and patriarchal attitude towards women, and in fact appeared to espouse women's equality, when he wrote:

A celui qui est pénétré de la sainteté des engagements réciproques, de l'égalité des sexes devant Dieu, des injustices de l'ordre social et de l'opinion vulgaire à cet égard, l'amour peut se révéler dans toute sa grandeur et dans toute sa beauté; mais à celui qui est imbu des erreurs communes de l'infériorité de la femme, de la différence de ses devoirs avec les nôtres en fait de fidélité [. . .] l'amour ne se révélera pas. (p. 103)

The narrator's views are not, however, matched by his actions, and he is in fact unable to practise what he preaches on the subject of equality between men and women, especially with relation to trust and fidelity. When, for instance, Eugénie does not allow him to enter his attic flat because she is hiding Marthe there, he suffers hugely from jealousy, and tries to deny his responsibility for these thoughts, by posing them as a general human reaction: 'Les pensées injustes, quand nous leur laissons prendre le dessus, s'emparent tellement de nous, qu'elles dominent encore notre imagination alors que la raison et la conscience protestent contre elles' (p. 79). Eugénie must remind him that his reaction is unjustified and that by giving in to jealousy he contradicts the trust he says he has in her. She says:

Dans nos jalousies, nous sommes capables de récuser le témoignage de nos yeux; et quand vous faites un serment, nous nous en rapportons à votre parole comme si elle était infaillible. Mais la nôtre est-elle donc moins sacrée? Pourquoi avez-vous fait de votre honneur et du nôtre deux choses si différentes? (p. 85)

Eugénie challenges his behaviour, for it does not correspond to his high-minded ideas. Whilst paying lip service to the idea of a fundamental equality between men and women, it is not something that he is able to practise, and his sympathies and trust instead go towards those who are similar to him, who share his gender. Those who are different are therefore viewed with an element of suspicion.

This reaction to what is different also comes through in the narrator's adherence to certain stereotypes of women. Whereas Horace is treated as an individual, there is evidence in the narrative of a tendency to categorise women, as when Théophile and Horace try to understand the character of Marthe, who had run off with M. Poisson to escape a violent father figure: 'Enfin nous pensions que son histoire pourrait bien ressembler à celle de toutes les filles séduites que les besoins de la vanité et les suggestions de la paresse précipitent dans le mal' (p. 92). This links to a generalised, patriarchal view of women as either pure or soiled, with Marthe fitted into the latter category. Another stereotype of women is given credibility when the narrator talks about Eugénie and Saint-Simonianism:

Je connaissais mieux qu'elle peut-être, par l'examen et par la lecture, le fort et le faible de cette philosophie; mais j'admirais toujours avec quelle pureté d'intention et quelle finesse de tact elle savait éliminer tacitement des discussions où s'élaborait la doctrine des adeptes secondaires, tout ce qui révoltait ses instincts nobles et pudiques, pour conclure souvent *à priori*, des secrètes élucubrations des maîtres, ce qui répondait à sa fierté naturelle, à sa droiture et à son amour de la justice. (p. 185, italics in original)

Here he sees women as creatures of instinct rather than learning, with the valued woman displaying the necessary 'pudeur'. The opposition between his reason and learning, and woman's instinct and purity is revealing of a certain attitude on his part.

It is this patriarchal perspective which will underlie the narrator's presentation of the story, and it is ultimately what makes him unreliable, despite the various markers of authority which seem to apply to him. However, *Horace* also reveals the patriarchal bias of novels in general. By introducing the voice of the editor at the end of the novel and according Horace an element of success in the literary world, the limited criticism of one man as narrator becomes extended to the institution of literature.

In terms of the patriarchal nature of literature, it is significant that Théophile's indulgence towards Horace is repeated by the editor of the story, to whom the final paragraph of the novel is to be attributed. After Horace has left for Italy, the narrator sends him on his belongings 'en lui promettant, de la part de Marthe et de nous tous, le pardon, l'oubli et le secret' (p. 326). It is not clear with what authority he offers Horace forgiveness from everyone since their voices, and hence any potentially critical judgements, are silenced and subsumed under Théophile's more indulgent approach. These exact sentiments are repeated by the editor, who writes: 'L'éditeur de cette histoire engage chaque lecteur à vouloir bien lui faire la même promesse' (ibid.). What may be seen to condition this appeal to the reader's indulgence towards Horace is the fact that Horace has not only become a productive member of society by returning to his legal studies and qualifying as a lawyer, but that he has also been a writer and has produced five novels. The professional and literary similarities between Horace and both Théophile and the editor of the story are thus more strongly marked. All three are part of a fraternity of males, and linked by the bonds of similarity on which patriarchy is built. The high-minded and apparently innocuous ideals of friendship are thus shown to have political implications, which infuse the literary project and condition the presentation of both male and female characters.

There is also in *Horace* a mise-en-abyme of the power of literature and of the male desires which shape it. This is achieved through the character of Horace, whose eloquence and mastery of language is emphasised from the outset of the novel. This becomes linked to the control Horace exerts over others. The narrator initially describes him thus: 'Horace avait cela de particulier, qu'en le voyant et en l'écoutant,



on était sous le charme de sa parole et de son geste' (p. 37). Horace exercises power through the word, whereas Paul Arsène, the other principal male character, does not have this power, and his language is described as having 'aucune poésie, ou du moins aucun art' (p. 127). Horace's ability to control through language is emphasised by his seduction of Marthe. She is aware of this power over her, and describes herself as powerless to combat it: 'Moi, je suis obscure, bornée, ignorante; [ . . . ] je ne peux rien exprimer, je n'ai pas une idée à moi, je ne pourrai en aucun moment dominer le cœur et l'esprit d'un homme comme lui!' (p. 152). The link in Marthe's mind between language and domination is clear, and those with linguistic power are able to define and hence control others. In the novel the link between linguistic control and literature is established as Horace defines Marthe through the female characters he finds in the books he reads:

Horace avait pris, dans les romans où il avait étudié la femme, des idées si vagues et si diverses sur l'espèce en général, qu'il jouait avec Marthe comme un enfant ou comme un chat joue avec un objet inconnu qui l'attire et l'effraie en même temps. [ . . . ] [Il] regardait sa nouvelle maîtresse à travers les différents types que ses lectures lui avaient laissés dans la tête. [ . . . ] Au milieu de toutes les fantaisies d'autrui, Horace oubliait de regarder le fond de son propre cœur et d'y chercher, comme dans un miroir limpide, la fidèle image de son amie. (pp. 165-66)

Literature thus becomes a source for the production and perpetuation of certain images of women which reflect male desires, for the list of authors who have influenced Horace is exclusively male and includes Musset, Shakespeare, Janin, Dumas and Balzac. If Horace exercises direct power through his eloquent language, then these male writers, and hence the literary establishment, are shown to be equally powerful in both the positive and negative images of women which they present, and which have such a debilitating effect on real women. This link between literature and patriarchy is further underlined, of course, when Horace himself becomes a writer, thus perpetuating images of women which express male desires, fantasies and phantasms. The artificiality of such a process in literature is laid bare in the way Horace removes these images from their fictional context and tries to apply them to reality. Yet the effect and influence they have is also made clear in this episode.



In *Horace*, what seems to allow for the perpetuation of such images is female silence, since this is at once the condition for, and the consequence of, the hegemony of the male on the narrative level. These images are less tenable when women speak, and the patriarchal claim to Absolute Truth is thus undermined. As I have shown, this is to some extent true of *Horace*, since it is Eugénie's judgement of Horace which corresponds most closely to the reader's perception of the 'truth'. Françoise Massardier-Kenney has undertaken a revealing study of the place accorded to male and female voices in the narrative of *Horace*, and argues that:

L'univocité masculine du narrateur se transforme lentement d'abord en une hétéroglossie qui inclut les voix des différents sexes et classes, puis, étonnement, en un glissement où la voix féminine, jusque-là étouffée commence par se faire entendre puis lentement se fait une avec la voix du narrateur et la submerge.<sup>43</sup>

Whilst I am not entirely convinced by Massardier-Kenney's case for the domination of the feminine perspective at the end of the novel through the progressive merging of Théophile's and Eugénie's voices, her point about the private female voice behind the public male voice is an important one, since this indicates 'un autre récit que celui présenté au niveau de la narration publique' (p. 292), and one which undermines this public narrative. This subversion of narrative hegemony, and hence of narrative authority, as a result of the tension between male and female voices and perspectives within the text will be an important issue in the second of the novels I wish to consider in this section.

Published in 1866, one year after the epistolary novel *Monsieur Sylvestre, Le Dernier Amour* is to some extent a prequel to this novel. It is set in Switzerland, where Sylvestre, the main character and narrator, marries Félicie in the knowledge that she was seduced in her youth and bore an illegitimate child (who subsequently died). Félicie's secret meetings with her cousin, Tonino, lead Sylvestre to suspect an

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<sup>43</sup> Françoise Massardier-Kenney, 'Questions de narration dans *Horace* ou les limites de la subversion', in *George Sand et l'écriture du roman: Actes du XI<sup>e</sup> colloque international George Sand*, ed. by Jeanne Goldin (Montreal: Paragraphes, 1996), pp. 287-92 (p. 289).

adulterous relationship, and, when this is confirmed, he is no longer able to love his wife, who as a result commits suicide. The story is told, in a similar fashion to the *romans champêtres*, by Sylvestre to a group of friends (here admittedly limited in number) and is apparently intended to illustrate Sylvestre's thesis on the way adulterous women should be treated by their husbands. Whereas the limitations in Théophile's perspective are evident in his indulgent attitude towards Horace's faults, Sylvestre betrays his unreliability as a result of his unwillingness to recognise his own faults. He reveals in his narrative an unlimited faith in his system of beliefs and his moral code, to which others are expected to conform. But like Théophile's high-minded ideals of friendship, this system is not devoid of gender bias, for although Félicie's behaviour is judged by this system, it is one over which she has no control, which she has not helped to shape and which consequently takes no account of her needs or desires. If *Horace* may be read as exposing the homosocial bonds upon which patriarchy is constructed, *Le Dernier Amour* highlights the exclusion and oppression of women that such a system operates. This is evident not only in the events of the story, but also in the way it is narrated, for Sylvestre's domination of the narrative is almost total, and apart from the letters reproduced in the text, only a few key conversations are reported in direct speech. Such domination makes *Le Dernier Amour* one of Sand's most complete investigations of the patriarchal psychology.

There is a certain amount of ambiguity in the presentation of Sylvestre as both narrator and character. In his own narrative he certainly portrays himself as authoritative, honest and respected, and constantly stresses that there is nothing reprehensible in his behaviour. The reader of *Monsieur Sylvestre* would also know him as a man who leads a hermitic existence and has certain fixed ideas, but who is nonetheless revered by the positive characters in that novel. This is still largely the case in this novel, although the narrator is less admiring in his attitude towards Sylvestre than was Pierre Sorède, the author of the majority of the letters in *Monsieur Sylvestre*. The narrator of *Le Dernier Amour* notes that Sylvestre is generally liked and is particularly respected by 'monsieur et madame \*\*\*' (whom one assumes to be Pierre Sorède and Aldine from the earlier novel), but also that 'malgré l'admiration

qu'on lui décerne dans la famille \*\*\* , ce n'est pas une intelligence bien lumineuse ni bien complète'.<sup>44</sup> He earlier describes him as 'un voisin discret dont nous riions un peu', who nonetheless has a 'caractère absolument respectable' (p. 26). The effect of such remarks is to suggest that the previous portrayal of Sylvestre may have been too steeped in admiration, and that this narrator, because of his greater detachment, will be more accurate in his depiction of this character. It also has the effect of diminishing Sylvestre's status as the intelligent philosopher whom Pierre Sorède so respected. Consequently, the narrator of *Le Dernier Amour*, in transcribing Sylvestre's account of his wife's adultery, does not suggest that it contains important human truths, and merely notes: 'quelle que soit la valeur de cette révélation, la voici telle que j'ai pu la reconstruire' (p. 29).

Against the narrator's portrayal of Sylvestre, one can set the impression he gives in the opening scene of the novel, which recounts a discussion about a local man who killed his unfaithful wife. This group of men whom the narrator describes as linked by 'les mêmes idées, les mêmes sentiments, les mêmes principes' (p. 25) are in some disagreement as to whether such an act can be justified or not. Now if this group of male friends may, in the light of what I have said about *Horace*, be read as a microcosm of patriarchal society, Sylvestre immediately appears to be somewhat apart from it, for it is to him that the narrator refers when he writes: 'un seul de nous n'avait pris aucune part à la discussion' (p. 26). The solution Sylvestre proposes for punishing the adulterous partner in a relationship will further distance himself from the opinions of this group. Pressed to reveal his thoughts, the following conversation takes place:

- J'ai essayé de trouver le châtiment qui moralise, je n'en ai jamais conçu d'autre.
- Quel est-il? L'abandon?
- Non.
- Le mépris?
- Encore moins.
- La haine?

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<sup>44</sup> George Sand, *Le Dernier Amour* (Paris: Des femmes, 1991), p. 27. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.

— L'amitié!  
On se regarda; les uns riaient, les autres ne comprenaient pas. (p. 28)

Whilst the others see only negative reactions as possible sources of punishment for adultery, Sylvestre paradoxically suggests friendship, a relationship which, in *Horace*, Théophile had described as 'cette intimité expansive de tous les instants' (p. 27). Rather than condemnation, judgement and domination, Sylvestre's solution would appear to suggest understanding, compassion, and indulgence. Although his idea of 'l'amitié envisagée comme châtiment' (p. 28) will turn out to be rather different from this, the initial impression of the character, based on this scene, would suggest an enlightened individual, who did not conform to the norms of patriarchal society. His detachment (indeed difference) from this group, their occasional mocking of him, and the narrator's unwillingness to share Pierre Sorède's unequivocally positive opinion of him, may in fact highlight the limitations of this group, and suggest that their lack of respect for Sylvestre is due to their inability to understand him. Sylvestre's authority may paradoxically be enhanced as a result.

This has certainly been a view of Sylvestre which has held currency among critics for some time. Anna Szabó argues that Sylvestre, like Bernard in *Mauprat*, should be read as a character who is 'digne de foi',<sup>45</sup> and in a later article she states that in the opening frame of *Le Dernier Amour*, 'tout sert [. . .] à valoriser le personnage, à donner du crédit à son discours'.<sup>46</sup> In her introduction to the Slatkine edition of the novel (1980), Simone Vierre presents Sylvestre as voicing the author's opinions, whilst Tivadar Gorilovics refers to him as 'ce second moi de Sand'.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, Sand herself wrote in a letter dated July 1865 to her son that she had 'la foi du vieux Sylvestre'.<sup>48</sup> However, since this letter was written a full year before the publication

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<sup>45</sup> Szabó, *Le Personnage sandien*, p. 36.

<sup>46</sup> Anna Szabó, 'Dernier Amour - dernière chance. De Jacques au Dernier Amour', in *George Sand et l'écriture du roman: Actes du XI<sup>e</sup> colloque international George Sand*, ed. by Jeanne Goldin (Montreal: Paragraphes, 1996), pp. 301-10 (p. 304, note 12).

<sup>47</sup> Tivadar Gorilovics, 'Un regard d'homme: le narrateur sandien', in *George Sand et l'écriture du roman: Actes du XI<sup>e</sup> colloque international George Sand*, ed. by Jeanne Goldin (Montreal: Paragraphes, 1996), pp. 251-59 (p. 257).

<sup>48</sup> George Sand, *Correspondance*, ed. by George Lubin, 25 vols (Paris: Garnier, 1964-91), XIX (1985), 292.

of *Le Dernier Amour*, Sand's remark refers to the Sylvestre of *Monsieur Sylvestre* and perhaps more particularly to his faith in socialism as the true source of happiness for mankind. It does not necessarily affirm her alignment with the views expressed by Sylvestre in *Le Dernier Amour*, and, as Peter Dayan argues, these are in any case views which one could scarcely map onto Sand's own life. He writes:

Il est clair que Sand, dans sa vie, n'aurait jamais accepté qu'un homme lui imposât la morale de Sylvestre. Femme adultère, elle ne se voyait pas pour autant déchue et souillée à jamais; et elle n'a certainement pas reconnu à son mari le droit de la tenir enfermée toute sa vie pour l'amener au repentir.<sup>49</sup>

It is precisely by dwelling on the contrast between Sylvestre's viewpoint and that which one might attribute to Sand, and hence ignoring Sylvestre's claims to honesty, his repeated affirmations of his clear conscience and of his moral probity, that the patriarchal essence of his actions and his philosophy becomes evident. As the limitations of Sylvestre's perspective are stressed, so his authority is undermined.

Dayan, in his masterful deconstruction of Sylvestre's positive self-presentation, sums up the basis of Sylvestre's character:

[Sylvestre] a un système moral rigide, et il satisfait aux exigences de ce système. Ceci lui donne une bonne opinion de lui-même, un contentement de soi, [. . .] une suffisance que rien ne peut ébranler. (p. 23)

Dayan exposes Sylvestre's unshakeable self-righteousness, and adds later in his study: 'Sylvestre croit tout comprendre, et ne voit que ce qui sert la bonne opinion qu'il a de lui-même'. It is indeed what Béatrice Didier calls Sylvestre's 'égocentrisme'<sup>50</sup> that is at the heart of the matter in this novel, for this egocentrism is also a phallocentrism. Like Théophile, like the narrator of *Indiana*, and like Jacques, Sylvestre's intellectual frame of reference is one which is based in his own masculine perspective on the world, and it is this perspective which dominates the narrative, and which is presented

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<sup>49</sup> Peter Dayan, *Lautréamont et Sand* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), p. 30.

<sup>50</sup> Béatrice Didier, 'Narrateurs, narrataires, intertextualité dans *Le Dernier Amour* de George Sand', in *(En)jeux de la communication romanesque: Hommage à Françoise van Rossum-Guyon*, ed. by Susan van Dijk and Christa Stevens (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), pp. 111-22 (p. 116).

as absolute and true, objective and universal. I have argued that the opening scene of the novel seems to suggest that Sylvestre is to be differentiated from the other men present, and that he does not share their opinions. Yet Sylvestre's opinions and behaviour are far from being unbiased, and are in fact underpinned by a certain gender ideology.

In the course of the novel it becomes clear that Sylvestre subscribes to patriarchal conceptions of femininity, and that Félicie only arouses his love when she conforms to his ideal of womanhood and suppresses her masculine side. It is this aspect to her character which Sylvestre initially finds disturbing, and in his first description of her he notes: 'elle avait dans tout son être je ne sais quoi d'anormal et de mystérieux. Elle était railleuse, incisive même, avec une physionomie sérieuse; prévenante, hospitalière et pleine de soins délicats, avec une brusquerie singulière' (p. 39). What makes Félicie 'abnormal' is the mix of stereotypically masculine and feminine traits which are combined in her character. As a result, Sylvestre is unable to fathom her, unable to reduce her to one defining characteristic:

Elle m'étonnait toujours comme un problème dont je ne saisisais pas la solution. [. . .] Cette fille de race artiste et de sang noble mêlé au sang rustique, née et élevée dans un milieu contraire à ses instincts, brisée encore enfant par la honte, la misère et la douleur, puis retransplantée dans la vie des champs et redevenue une paysanne active et parcimonieuse avec des sentiments de générosité chevaleresque et une organisation délicate, tout cela ne se tenait pas et formait un ensemble indéchiffrable pour moi, pour elle-même probablement. (p. 68)

Whereas here Sylvestre recognises the various elements of a complex psychology, it is later by one aspect of her character (her sensuality and resultant sexual misconduct) that he will define and class her. However, at this point she remains for him 'cette nature déclassée et *inclassable*' (p. 69, italics in original). This seemingly innocuous remark reveals a great deal about Sylvestre and his need to categorise people, to reduce them to an essence. Initially it is important for him to enclose Félicie in a non-threatening and unambiguous sexual identity. Consequently, when in conversation she reveals her suffering at not being loved, he criticises her misanthropic attitude and



advises her: 'Rendez-vous aimable et connaissez enfin le bonheur d'être aimée' (p. 87). Whilst this advice does not contain an explicit gender ideology, and is in fact preceded by general considerations on loving humanity in which Sylvestre sets up his own behaviour as an example to follow, its effects are nonetheless to make Félicie more feminine and this is a change of which Sylvestre approves. When he returns to La Diablerette after a few weeks absence, Félicie is more silent, less energetic, and hence more feminine. He remarks:

Sous l'empire de l'amour, Félicie devenait tout à coup divinement belle; le marbre s'était fait femme. La crainte caressante, la pudeur, la passion comprimée, la soumission, l'abandon de sa fière personnalité, l'humilité tendre, la douceur, ce charme profond auquel rien ne résiste, toutes les faiblesses, toutes les puissances de la femme étaient en elle. (p. 97)<sup>51</sup>

It is only when she conforms to his conception of female beauty, when she becomes conventionally feminine, and when he can thus categorise her, that he falls in love with her. Peter Dayan argues that since Sylvestre has remodelled Félicie to his liking, and to some extent in his image, and since the *coup de foudre* between them is the result a meeting of looks in a mirror, this indicates that what Sylvestre loves in Félicie is the reflection of himself (p. 25). I would suggest that what he loves is in fact the illusion of femininity in Félicie, the image he has of her (projected in the mirror), rather than the real, sensual, physical woman.

Félicie's sensuality will indeed be a major issue in the narrative. Its treatment will highlight Sylvestre's adherence to certain patriarchal ideas regarding women, and his application of patriarchal double standards in his attitude towards men and women who transgress sexually. Nevertheless, Sylvestre seems initially to forgive Félicie for her past sexual transgression, and, in one of his first conversations with her, he assures her that he sees no obstacles to her marrying:

Si vous n'avez à vous reprocher que le malheur dont vous m'avez parlé hier, vous l'avez expié rudement, ce me semble, et on serait lâche de vous le reprocher. (p. 57)

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<sup>51</sup> The imagery of marble applied to a woman is reminiscent of *Lélia*, though here it is used of a woman who is far from being viewed as frigid.

He seems to accept that she has now atoned for what happened in her youth, and assures her that she merits respect and that he has no doubts about her character. The views he expresses here appear admirably enlightened, and recall what Eugénie said in *Horace* about a 'fallen' woman's right to forgiveness in love:

L'homme qui a le cœur fait pour aimer ne se demande pas si l'objet de son amour est digne de lui. Du moment qu'il aime, il n'examine plus le passé; il jouit du présent, et il croit à l'avenir. Si sa raison lui dit qu'il y a dans ce passé quelque chose à pardonner, il pardonne dans le secret de son cœur [...]. Cet oubli des torts est si naturel à celui qui aime. (p. 154)

But as it emerges later in the novel, Sylvestre will not be able to practise these high-minded ideals.

Although Sylvestre falls in love with Félicie, his love for her is more reasoned than passionate, and he admits that he has banished all 'ivresse' from his character, even describing himself as 'épuré' (p. 98). His sentiments towards her appear rather more paternal in nature, strongly linked to his desire to help and to rehabilitate her. He says: 'j'étais tout à la tendresse, à la reconnaissance, au besoin de consoler et de rajeunir cette âme désolée et flétrie qui voulait bien renaître pour se donner à moi' (p. 99). Initially, however, he rejects the idea of marrying her, for he is jealous of Tonino, Félicie's cousin. When he broaches the subject of marriage with both Félicie and her brother Jean, he tells them instead that he is not truly in love with Félicie. He claims that he can offer her only his respect and devotion, but feels that she merits more than this 'sentiment purement paternel' (p. 110). However, following the news of Jean's death, he admits his love for her and his jealousy of Tonino. When he and Félicie discuss this matter, she admits that at one point, in desperation and faced with the loneliness of her existence, she did consider reciprocating Tonino's love and marrying him. Although she makes clear that this is no longer how she feels, and that she only reacted in this way because Sylvestre seemed to be ignoring her, his reaction is indicative of the attitude he will adopt later:

Les sens ardents du jeune homme réagissaient sur les sens inassouvis de Félicie. Un magnétisme, involontaire peut-être de part et d'autre, les avait, dès les plus jeunes années de Tonino, poussés l'un vers l'autre. Ils

ne s'aimaient pas [...] mais cet attrait physique, cette curiosité inquiète, ce désir de l'un, cette crainte de l'autre, ce je-ne-sais-quoi d'ému et de sensuel qui flottait entre eux me causait bien naturellement une sorte de fureur. (pp. 130-31)

Sylvestre reads both these characters as sensual beings with real physical urges. He cannot accept this, and it triggers a violent reaction ('fureur'), which is presented here as a natural one.

It is immediately after this episode that Sylvestre reveals his clear inability to forgive Félicie for her previous sexual misdemeanour. Having discussed the feelings of jealousy which Tonino's presence provokes, and the temptation he once represented for Félicie, Sylvestre suggests that Tonino not return to live with them. Félicie agrees, and wants to write immediately to tell Tonino this and 'lui ôter toute espérance' (p. 131). Sylvestre's reaction is revealing:

Tonino avait donc de l'espérance, elle lui en avait laissé concevoir! Cette femme austère n'était pas vraiment chaste. Et pouvait-elle l'être? Sa première faute, sur laquelle ma pensée ne s'était guère arrêtée jusque-là, m'apparut comme une véritable souillure, un délire précoce, un entraînement tout animal que la pudeur et la fierté n'avaient peut-être pas seulement songé à vaincre. Je me rappelai qu'en parlant de cette faute, Félicie n'avait jamais montré de confusion ou de repentir véritable. Elle relevait la tête au contraire, et semblait menacer plutôt que rougir. (p. 131)

With the idea of Félicie's sensuality firmly imprinted on his mind, her past sexual misconduct, which he had earlier reassuringly called her 'malheur' (p. 57), is again referred to as her 'faute' with its connotations of judgement and blame. It is this continuing doubt in Sylvestre's mind about Félicie's purity, and the fact that he cannot forgive or forget the fact that she is a sexual woman which will colour his reactions to her behaviour later.

When Sixte-More, a neighbour and erstwhile suitor of Félicie, tells Sylvestre that Félicie has been meeting Tonino secretly, his jealousy is aroused and he is immediately inclined to believe these allegations, which for him constitute 'le

déchirement de ce voile du sanctuaire où reposaient ma foi et mes illusions' (p. 184). He comes to see her as fundamentally impure, for he says: 'Les femmes de ce caractère ont des besoins passionnés d'expansion qui ne sont que le besoin d'encourager leur faute ou de poétiser leurs vices' (p. 199). She is categorised in his mind as an impure woman and he can no longer love her. Even before he has proof that adultery has taken place, he is convinced of it because of what he knows about her past and because, in his eyes, she can never change. His reading of his wife's letters to Tonino, which she had entrusted to him shortly after their marriage, presumably in order to demonstrate the innocence of her past relationship with Tonino, prove for him her guilt. In these letters she expresses her love for Sylvestre and her desire to forget Tonino, and although Sylvestre admits that the literal meaning of these letters could prove that Félicie had triumphed over Tonino's passions, he reads them at a deeper level and imposes another meaning on them:

Pour qui analyse et approfondit, il n'est point de vraie chasteté dans certaines épreuves, et, entre ce que j'avais supposé des vagues et timides désirs de Tonino et la passion sensuelle qu'il avait osé tant de fois déclarer et dépeindre, je découvrais un abîme. [...] Félicie avait eu à la réprimer et à la combattre durant de longues années, [...] elle en avait eu peur, non seulement pour moi, mais pour elle-même. Une de ces lettres admettait clairement la possibilité d'y succomber, et, à travers des réprimandes et des menaces d'une puérilité presque risible, elle trahissait le trouble des sens et l'effroi de la chute. Ce n'est pas ainsi qu'une femme de cœur et de bien arrive à se faire respecter. Elle doit se préserver et n'avoir jamais besoin de se défendre. (p. 204)

The deformation of Félicie's words is particularly marked in this passage. Sylvestre is the one who decides what constitutes innocence and guilt in this situation. The fact that she was seduced when she was younger will return to define her, and a discussion between Tonino and Félicie will apparently remind him of this fault (though from previous remarks it is clear that he had never in fact forgotten it): 'Cette faute ancienne, cette tache indélébile, ma généreuse équité avait cru l'effacer à jamais; Tonino la faisait reparaître, comme cette marque à l'épaule des forçats qu'on ravive en frappant dessus' (p. 220). The contradiction between Sylvestre's statement that he had tried to erase this mark from his mind, and his description of it as indelible is

revealing of his true attitude towards Félicie's sexuality, which he clearly sees as latent in her character. This is heightened by his comparison of her to a convict, to someone guilty of a serious crime and marked by this for life. Whatever Félicie says or does, she will now always be guilty in his eyes. It is his voice which dominates the narrative, and Félicie will increasingly be silenced. This is evident in the relative lack of direct reporting of Félicie's speech in the last 100 pages of the novel, undoubtedly indicating the breakdown in communication between these two people and Sylvestre's unwillingness to speak to her. For him, the only way of getting to the truth is by relying on his own observations and reasoning, as he tells Sixte More: 'je ne veux m'en rapporter qu'à moi-même pour découvrir la vérité' (p. 210). He refuses to discuss with Félicie the suspicions that he has about her adultery with Tonino: 'Interroger Félicie n'était pas le moyen de saisir le vrai; elle savait mentir, je n'en pouvais plus douter. [ . . . ] J'avais bien constaté qu'elle manquait de logique, je n'avais plus à m'étonner qu'elle manquât de conscience' (p. 198). Truth becomes a masculine value, from which Félicie is excluded. By showing his unwillingness to consider her point of view and to find out 'her side of the story', he reveals that he has condemned her in advance and that he has already determined what the truth will be. This also indicates his unwillingness to consider any views which might contradict or cause him to question his own version of events. Since we as readers are already aware of the distortion of Félicie's words in Sylvestre's analysis of her letters, one is led to suspect that all that Félicie does will be turned against her. The almost complete textual silencing to which she is subjected deprives the reader of material with which to counter Sylvestre's interpretations, which he presents as statements of fact, and thus ensures the coherence of his system.

Convinced of Félicie's guilt, it is on her that Sylvestre places the responsibility and blame for this adulterous relationship. He ignores, or rather is unwilling to accord importance to evidence which would show that it is Tonino who initiated the adultery, and whose passions re-ignited Félicie's, despite her attempts at resistance. Félicie accuses Tonino of having almost forced himself on her, of having therefore been unable to contain his own passions:

Oh! la première fois, c'est malgré moi!... [. . .] J'ai combattu toute une journée, et quand je voulais fuir, tu fermais la sortie avec tes bras qui étaient de fer. Tu as employé la force! [. . .] Tu m'as tenue prisonnière malgré moi, je le jure devant Dieu! (p. 236)

Tonino himself admits that he was the one who overcame Félicie's initial scruples in order to create an existence which he describes as 'brûlante et délicieuse' (p. 239).

But Sylvestre tells us that not only should Félicie have known better, but also that she is responsible for Tonino's passionate and sensual nature:

Lequel était le plus coupable? Par le fait et en apparence, c'était Tonino. La perversité de ses instincts était flagrante; mais, comme intelligence et comme raisonnement, il était très inférieur à Félicie. Sa conscience avait été moins avertie [. . .]. Il était réellement l'élève et la création de Félicie. C'est elle seule qui eût pu le rendre chaste, sincère et désintéressé. Elle n'avait pu lui donner la droiture et la chasteté qu'elle n'avait pas. [. . .] Hélas! oui, cette femme était moins excusable que son complice. Si celui-ci avait eu l'initiative de l'attaque, il avait obéi à l'instinct viril, à la curiosité délirante de la puberté, à une première explosion des sens que Félicie avait subie jadis à ses dépens et dont elle connaissait bien le danger. (pp. 251-52)

Sylvestre's logic here affords us a classic example of patriarchal double standards.

Tonino's adultery can be excused principally because he is a man and also because he is not expected to know any better due to the deficiencies in his upbringing. Yet what of Félicie's childhood and her domineering and unloving father? Furthermore, whereas Félicie's teenage sexual transgression has not only been punished, but has also become the defining element of her character, Tonino's adultery is portrayed as a 'première explosion des sens' (ibid.) which is not condemned in the same way (and Tonino's wife is not, as far as we know, made aware of his infidelity). Sylvestre also refuses to look further into Tonino's motivations for arousing Félicie's sensual nature and re-igniting her love for him, and yet it is obvious from the conversations which he overhears that Tonino wants money from Félicie, and there is at least the suspicion that this is what he seeks to gain from their relationship. He finally achieves this when Sylvestre orders him to leave the country unpunished and significantly richer, whereas Félicie ends up paying both financially and with her life for her adultery.



Sylvestre refuses to accept any blame for Félicie's adultery and refuses to question his own conduct towards her. On first being told of Félicie's meetings with Tonino, he affirms his clear conscience and says: 'Moi, j'étais pur' (p. 196), and 'J'étais donc tout simplement un honnête homme' (p. 197). Any explicit link between Sylvestre's behaviour and Félicie's adultery is hence erased from the text.

Given that Félicie's voice is largely silenced at the end of the novel, the two letters she writes to Tonino assume crucial importance since they represent her principal access to the narrative level (the second of these letters is her suicide note), and these should lead Sylvestre to question his own behaviour. In her first letter Félicie admits to loving Sylvestre, but also makes it clear that his love is not enough for her, as she needs true love, even passionate love, rather than his paternal love. She hopes that Tonino can give her the emotional fulfilment that she needs, for this is a woman whose only desire is to be loved, and who writes: 'Enfin, aime-moi, tout est là' (p. 233). Sylvestre does not try to understand the reasons for her adultery, and does not consider that the desperate desire for love expressed in this letter might be related to the fact that since he has learnt of her meetings with Tonino, he has stopped loving her and has been closing her out of his life. He says that he has acted 'en philosophe, en ami, en homme religieux, en homme du monde' and that he has been 'le père spirituel de cette âme enfant' (p. 275). Indeed, he has been everything, one might argue, except a loving husband, which was exactly the role Félicie needed him to fulfil. He simply sees her as adulterous and worthy of his disdain. There can be little doubt from the conversations she has with Tonino and from her letter that her love is passionate. Everything points to her being carried away by her own passion which was re-awoken by Tonino, and there is nothing in her letter which indicates explicitly that Sylvestre was at fault. Félicie even stresses how Sylvestre's love for her remains constant, and she suggests that as she has become colder towards him he has been more tender and devoted towards her. But Sylvestre's role in her adultery cannot be discounted. What Tonino offers Félicie is passionate love, and this is clearly what she desires. Sylvestre's love is too reasonable for her, and he himself describes it as an 'adoption paternelle d'une âme orageuse et tourmentée' (p. 181). At the heart of

Félicie's letter is the voice of a woman who needs to be loved exclusively, who cannot bear to be neglected and who sees death as the only solution to being abandoned by her lover. She writes to Tonino: 'si tu m'abandonnes, je me haïrai moi-même et je ne supporterai pas la vie' (p. 232). Sylvestre does not hear this voice. He does not read more deeply into this letter since the only meaning he wants to find is evident at the most superficial level. If such a reading confirms that he was right not to accept the apparent innocence of Félicie's and Tonino's earlier correspondence, his way of reading nonetheless runs counter to the intellectual superiority he claimed in his interpretation of that correspondence, and constitutes initial evidence of a lack of logic on Sylvestre's part. The result of this is that Sylvestre does not act towards Félicie the way he in fact should, for he offers her only the indifference and abandonment which she has already said will be fatal to her. When he first learns of her adultery, he seeks refuge alone in a chalet in the mountains without explaining his absence to Félicie, and twice avoids her when she comes to see him. Later he will mention his 'assiduité au travail' and 'ardeur à la promenade' (p. 273), and these are presumably means of avoiding her presence. Sylvestre's scorn and repugnance for Félicie are barely concealed towards the end of the novel. When she accuses him of not loving her, he instinctively replies that he loves her more than ever and wants to offer her a kiss as a sign of his forgiveness, but he is unable to overcome a psychological barrier to close, physical contact with this sexual woman. He writes:

Le ciel m'est témoin qu'en disant à cette femme: "Je vous aime plus que jamais", je croyais lui dire la vérité. J'avais eu une si fervente résolution de lui pardonner, que je ne doutais pas de moi-même. J'étais paternel, j'étais évangélique dans ce moment-là. Je croyais recevoir dans mon sein l'enfant prodigue, rapporter au bercail sur mon épaule la brebis égarée; mais, en surprenant, au lieu d'un rayon de reconnaissance, un éclair de volupté dans ces yeux d'azur, je ne sais quelle secrète horreur s'était emparée de moi, comme si j'allais, en partageant un désir sacrilège, souiller la plus noble victoire de l'âme, le pardon de la charité! (pp. 273-74)

His repulsion is strongly marked here, and whereas the illusion of the woman in the mirror with whom he fell in love had appeared to him as 'la plus chaste des femmes' (p. 253), the physical and desiring woman that he now sees before him frightens him.

Given that Sylvestre has classified Félicie as the adulterous woman, unfaithful, lying and degraded, the only escape which Félicie can imagine is through death. Her suicide note reveals the depth of her despair: 'Plus d'espoir, plus du tout... Il [Monsieur Sylvestre] ne m'aime plus, il ne m'aimera plus jamais!' (p. 303). It is clearly Sylvestre's indifference to her, his repugnance even, which drives her to death. She is intensely aware of how he feels about her: 'Tout ce qui est moi vivante lui est amer et repoussant' (p. 305). Her only desire now is to escape these constant reminders of her 'impurity', to forget that she is 'souillée et méprisée' (p. 304). Death seems to be the only solution to escape from a man, and indeed a society, which will not let her forget her past: 'J'ai sans doute commis un grand crime; mais à quoi bon s'humilier, puisque rien ne peut l'effacer? La mort seule...' (p. 305). This letter to a large extent exculpates Sylvestre, for Félicie presents him in a positive light and takes all the guilt and blame on herself. She criticises only his inability to accept that her love for him was still strong: 'Ah! Sylvestre, si vous saviez comme je vous aimais!... Mais [. . .] vous ne comprenez pas qu'on aime et qu'on trahisse' (ibid.). As Félicie stresses the positive aspects to Sylvestre's character, even going so far as to call him 'admirable' in her suicide note (ibid.), Sylvestre's good opinion of himself is reinforced.

It is Sylvestre's clear conscience which will be affirmed at the close of the story. On reading Félicie's suicide note he recognises that he had a hand in her death, but he absolves himself of any feeling of guilt:

Je me demandais cependant avec effroi si je n'étais pas, autant que lui [Tonino], le meurtrier de cette infortunée. Par le fait, hélas! oui! Si j'avais pu lui rendre mon amour, elle eut pu vivre. [. . .] Si j'avais su feindre je l'aurais sauvée; mais il est des natures qui ne peuvent pas mentir et qui l'essayeraient en vain. Pouvais-je me reprocher de n'être pas un hypocrite? (p. 306)

He even goes so far as to suggest that Félicie wanted to punish him through her death by causing him 'un éternel remords' (ibid.). This remorse is, however, scarcely evident in the remainder of the novel, for on the penultimate page Sylvestre affirms:

'je n'étais pas mécontent de moi' (p. 313). Instead it is Félicie who is guilty, for she has not accepted 'la conséquence de son égarement' (p. 306). Yet this is also a charge that could be levelled at Sylvestre, for although he has not strayed from his own moral code, he has not respected codes of behaviour laid down by others. Early in his marriage, Sylvestre had been warned by Félicie's doctor that he should not expect her to be 'bien conséquente avec elle-même' (p. 183), and he was given the following advice: 'Rendez-la toujours heureuse si vous voulez la conserver' (p. 182). He, however, rejects this interpretation offered by an outsider since it does not correspond to his own understanding of his wife:

De ceux qui comprennent de telles organisations, les médecins sont les derniers, surtout les vieux médecins instruits et raisonnables. Malgré eux, ils voudraient ramener la nature à la logique naturelle: quoi de plus sage? Mais il se trouve souvent que les types anormaux auraient besoin d'échapper au contrôle de la raison. (p. 184)

Sylvestre is, however, unable to act on this insight into Félicie's character and accept the irrationality of her behaviour. He too will act with reason and logic after his wife's adultery, and will condemn her for her lack of reason, for not having thought through the consequences of her adulterous relationship with Tonino. Not only is Sylvestre deaf to the doctor's advice and to Félicie's own warnings of the consequences of abandonment and indifference, but he is also inconsistent in his own behaviour and unwilling to accept that the consequence of this has been his wife's suicide.

But this lack of consistency, if not logic, is even more apparent when one remembers that the means of punishing adultery which Sylvestre proposed at the outset of his narrative was 'l'amitié' (p. 28), and this is what his story is meant to illustrate. This contradiction between the coldness that Sylvestre displays towards Félicie, and the friendship he argues should be applied as a punishment would, logically, suggest that Sylvestre has learned from his own experience and understood that he had been wrong to act the way he did. Yet his affirmation of his 'bonne conscience' (p. 314), and his belief that 'tout ce qui constitue l'être moral avait fait ce qu'il avait pu faire de

mieux' (p. 313) show this not to be the case. But the moral of the story is all but forgotten by the end of the novel, and the narrator does not intervene to link Sylvestre's narrative back to the opinions he voiced at the opening of the story. Sylvestre's inconsistencies and his lack of perspicacity are thus not affirmed, but left to emerge for themselves, and his authority is thus undermined from within.

But for the attentive reader of Sand, this authority will also have been undermined to some extent in what Sylvestre says about *Jacques*. The similarities between these two novels have not been fully explored by critics, and Sylvestre's inability to apply the lessons of the earlier novel to his own situation merits attention. Anna Szabó has considered some of the parallels between these two novels, but is convinced of the fundamental superiority of both heroes, and therefore, I think, rather misses the point. I shall consider issues surrounding Jacques's superiority in Part Two of this thesis, but for now I want to look at the relationships between both male protagonists and their wives, for Sylvestre's reading of *Jacques* fails to take into account the parallels between Fernande's and Félicie's adulterous relationships.

Sylvestre sets himself up as a superior reader of Sand's novels, and claims to have 'assez bien compris l'ensemble de son œuvre', adding that 'l'opinion de Madame Sand, ou pour mieux dire, ses aperçus et ses recherches n'étaient pas sans importance pour moi' (p. 247). Whilst Sylvestre is, I think, right to say that *Jacques* is not 'une thèse pour ou contre le mariage' (p. 248), his reading of the novel is nonetheless limited by his concentration on the character of Jacques. For Sylvestre, Jacques is characterised by his 'désintéressement de la vie', and therefore the moral of the novel becomes: 'Puisque tu ne sais pas vouloir, tu n'as pas le droit de vivre' (ibid.).

Contrary to Jacques, Sylvestre's will to live is strong, and so suicide is not an option for him. However, yet again we have evidence of Sylvestre's distortion of what he reads to make it fit in with his own code of behaviour and beliefs, rather than allowing it to shape and influence this code. His reading of *Jacques* is limited by his own convictions, by his desire to find justifications for his actions, and he is blind to the obvious parallels between his situation and that of Jacques: both men have married

younger women, not primarily for love but to offer these women a better future (though, as I will argue later, Jacques's reasons are perhaps more complex than it first appears); both men offer these women paternal affection and friendship rather than passionate, exclusive love; and both men are cheated on by their wives. In *Jacques* it is clear that if Fernande cheats on Jacques it is because he does not offer her the type of love she wants, and she repeatedly rejects the idea that she could be satisfied with someone who loved her as a father. Their marriage is thus built on unstable foundations, and when Octave offers Fernande his passionate love, she is unable to resist. There is a similar pattern in *Le Dernier Amour*, for Félicie too rejects the idea of a marriage built on paternal love, and Sylvestre is only too aware of her need for a more passionate attachment. And yet, like Jacques, and in spite of what he should have learned from his reading of this novel, Sylvestre marries Félicie, only to offer her a relationship on his terms. Her desires are excluded, and the outcome is the same as in *Jacques*.

Sylvestre thus reveals his own weaknesses and the limitations of his system of beliefs. Like Théophile's, it is a system which is built exclusively around the interests and desires of the male, and which excludes and suppresses the woman's perspective. These two narratives point to a female voice enclosed, if not imprisoned in an overpowering male discourse of rationality and logic. But as these women's voices are heard, the partiality of the male perspective is exposed and another perspective glimpsed through the cracks in the narrative discourse. This will also be the case in *Lettres à Marcie*, a theoretical text which is also a novel, but in which the woman's voice is completely silenced.

(iii) *The Male Subject of Theory: 'Lettres à Marcie'*

*Lettres à Marcie* (1837) has often been read as a statement of Sand's attitude towards feminism, though attempts to impose a single meaning on this text are rather undermined by its contradictory nature. On the one hand it contains a vociferous attack on feminist movements in France in the nineteenth century and glorifies



women's maternal role. At the same time it seems to criticise a society in which a young unmarried woman can find no outlet for her talents, and also to demand women's right to a philosophical education. For Naomi Schor, these contradictions reflect the tensions between the diverse poles of the feminist movement, insofar as this includes both liberal factions who seek the integration of women into public life, and radical factions who refuse all compromise with patriarchal society.<sup>52</sup> However, such an interpretation depends on fixing the text as a theoretical or philosophical treatise, whereas the generic status of *Lettres à Marcie* is particularly ambiguous.

This series of letters was first published in *Le Monde* in 1837, but was abandoned prematurely due to a dispute between Sand and Lamennais, then editor of the paper, who censored some passages in the third letter. This led Sand to write to him to ask what limits were being placed on her as an author, and whether she could write about divorce. When Lamennais replied that he would prefer that she did not address 'une question morale et politique si grave',<sup>53</sup> Sand wrote only a further three letters before abandoning the project. In her preface to the 1843 edition of *Lettres à Marcie*, she acknowledges that this is a 'fragment incomplet',<sup>54</sup> though she claims that as it was written for Lamennais, she stopped contributing material to the newspaper when he ceased to be editor of *Le Monde*. However, the break in publication between the third and fourth letters (25th February and 14th March 1837) is sufficiently long to indicate that something was happening at that time (the other letters were published at intervals of about a week), and this also corresponds to the dates of the letters exchanged by Sand and Lamennais (28th February and 2nd March). Furthermore, Marie d'Agoult states explicitly in a letter to Liszt of 12th March 1837 that 'George est en désaccord avec *Le Monde*. Les retranchements de l'abbé à la troisième lettre à Marcie lui ayant mis la puce à l'oreille, elle lui écrit une lettre parfaitement convenable

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<sup>52</sup> Naomi Schor, 'Le Féminisme et George Sand: *Lettres à Marcie*', *Revue des sciences humaines*, 226 (1992), 21-35 (p. 28).

<sup>53</sup> Félicité de Lamennais, *Correspondance générale*, ed. by Louis le Guillou, 9 vols (Paris: Armand Colin, 1971-81), VII (1978), 157-58.

<sup>54</sup> George Sand, *Lettres à Marcie* (Paris: Perrotin, 1843), p. 153. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.

[. . .]'.<sup>55</sup> After this dispute, the final letters in this series were published on the 14th, 23rd and 27th March, after which date Sand abandoned publication of the text, leaving it incomplete.

Whilst Kristina Wingård Vareille does not consider the status of the text in her study of *Lettres à Marcie*, Schor addresses this issue directly.<sup>56</sup> For her, the interest of this text lies principally in the fact that it resists reductive classification as either fiction or biography, novel or philosophical treatise, and she writes:

Les chercheurs [sandiens] ont tendance à privilégier ou la vie, ou l'œuvre.  
[. . .] Le texte dont je veux parler constitue une sorte de défi à ces découpages, dans la mesure où il s'agit d'un roman par lettres, mais d'une correspondance fictive, d'un texte romanesque qui est aussi un roman d'idées. (p. 23)

The generic status of the text also forms the central problematic of Éric Paquin's recent study of *Lettres à Marcie*, in which he argues, based on Sand's assertions in her preface and on a consideration of the form of the text, that it is to be read as 'un recueil de lettres de direction',<sup>57</sup> and hence as an epistolary novel rather than a philosophical treatise. He further suggests that it is due to the internal constraints of this form rather than to external factors (the dispute with Lamennais) that the novel ends after only six letters, for Marcie's mentor has by this point given his advice and 'la suite des lettres de l'ami n'aurait pu que tomber dans la surcharge des formules de rappel évitée jusque-là' (p. 128).

The generic status of the text is certainly important, since it has implications for interpretation of the narrative voice and relates to the essential question of whether a connection is established between this voice and that of Sand, or whether a certain

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<sup>55</sup> Sand, *Correspondance*, III (1967), 713, note 2 (italics in original).

<sup>56</sup> Kristina Wingård Vareille, *Socialité, sexualité et les impasses de l'histoire: L'Évolution de la thématique sandienne d'Indiana (1832) à Mauprat (1837)*, *Studia Romanica Upsaliensia*, 41 (Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 1987), pp. 339-43 and 373-414 relate to *Lettres à Marcie*.

<sup>57</sup> Éric Paquin, 'Le problème éditorial et formel d'un roman épistolaire inachevé/inachevable, les *Lettres à Marcie*', in *George Sand et l'écriture du roman: Actes du XI<sup>e</sup> colloque international George Sand*, ed. by Jeanne Goldin (Montreal: Paragraphes, 1996), pp. 119-30 (p. 125).

distance is placed between the author and the text. If this text is to be considered a novel, then one might with greater conviction separate the narrative voice from that of the author. If however *Lettres à Marcie* is to be considered as a philosophical treatise, then the distinction between authorial and textual voices is perhaps more difficult, if not impossible to sustain.

In her preface Sand downplays the philosophical importance of this text, which she describes as 'un fragment incomplet et sans aucune valeur philosophique' (p. 153). She also refers to the text as 'une sorte de roman sans événement' (ibid.), and as 'un roman intime' (p. 154). Consistent with the classification of this text as a novel, Sand further rejects the possibility that it be read as a statement of theoretical position on marriage and religion, and writes: 'je ne crois pas que ces fragments aient aucune couleur déterminée dont on puisse tirer des inductions solides' (p. 153). In this preface Sand distances herself from the content of these letters, and denies their philosophical content. She does however admit that although she has not broached serious matters such as marriage in the novel, she might well have done, had the first publication of the letters not been unexpectedly interrupted: 'Il est probable qu'en continuant ce roman intime des *Lettres à Marcie* j'aurais causé avec elle sur ces graves matières' (p. 154). Since the 'je' of this sentence can only refer to Sand as writer of the preface, this statement might be seen to undermine the distance that I am trying to place between author and textual voice. However, it is not, I think, exaggerated to posit that the author could claim to speak to her female character through the textual persona of Marcie's mentor, without his ideological position necessarily representing her own. A further quotation, this time from Sand's correspondence, concerning this novel adds weight to this assertion. In a letter to Lamennais of February 1837 Sand writes:

En commençant ces *lettres à Marcie*, je me promettais de me renfermer dans un cadre moins sérieux que celui où je me trouve aujourd'hui, malgré moi, poussée par l'invincible *vouloir* de mes pauvres réflexions. J'en suis effrayée, car dans le peu d'heures que j'ai eu le bonheur de passer à vous écouter avec le respect et la vénération dont mon cœur est rempli pour vous, je n'ai jamais songé à vous demander le résultat de votre examen sur les questions avec lesquelles je me trouve aux prises aujourd'hui. Je

ne sais même pas si le sort actuel des femmes vous a occupé, au milieu de tant de préoccupations religieuses et politiques dont votre vie intellectuelle a été remplie. Ce qu'il y a de plus curieux en ceci, c'est que moi-même qui ai écrit durant toute ma vie littéraire sur ce sujet, je sais à peine à quoi m'en tenir et ne m'étant jamais résumée, n'ayant jamais rien conclu que de très vague, il m'arrive aujourd'hui de conclure d'inspiration sans trop savoir d'où cela me vient, sans savoir le moins du monde si je me trompe ou non, sans pouvoir m'empêcher de conclure comme je fais et trouvant en moi je ne sais quelle certitude, qui est peut-être une voix de la vérité, et peut-être une voix impertinente de l'orgueil. Pourtant, me voilà lancée, et j'éprouve le désir d'étendre ce cadre des *lettres à Marcie* tant que je pourrai y faire entrer des questions relatives aux femmes. J'y voudrais parler de tous les devoirs, du mariage, de la maternité, etc. ...<sup>58</sup>

Sand here states that what she is discussing is not 'la cause des femmes', which was one of the contemporary expressions for speaking of feminist demands, but 'le sort actuel des femmes', and 'des questions relatives aux femmes'.<sup>59</sup> This apparently insignificant semantic shift is charged with implications for the tone of the novel. If 'la cause des femmes' signals a feminist discourse, and therefore most probably a female voice, 'le sort actuel des femmes', as a statement of the position of women in society, need not be expressed by a female voice. Indeed, the theorisation of women's role in society, a discussion of her 'devoirs', including '[le] mariage' and 'la maternité', may well be more obviously a male privilege, not only because theory is a field men have often reserved for themselves, but also because it is they who speak from a position of social authority. Luce Irigaray makes this point when she writes in *J'aime à toi* that, 'toute la philosophie occidentale est maîtrise de la direction du vouloir et de la pensée par le sujet, historiquement homme'.<sup>60</sup> In this context the question addressed to Lamennais assumes added significance especially compared to Sand's own answer when she turns it on herself. Lamennais (the man) is addressed as the source of all wisdom and truth, and is held in respect and veneration by Sand (the woman). Whilst interested to know his views on 'le sort actuel des femmes', the

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<sup>58</sup> Sand, *Correspondance*, III (1967), 711-12, italics in original, my underlining.

<sup>59</sup> Sand uses this same expression in her unfinished letter 'Aux Membres du Comité Central' of April 1848 (*Correspondance*, VIII (1971), 400-08), in which she refers to 'la cause de mon sexe' (p. 407).

<sup>60</sup> Luce Irigaray, *J'aime à toi* (Paris: Grasset, 1992), p. 80.

question is so phrased as to belittle this subject compared to his important 'préoccupations religieuses et politiques'. Having thus devalued the topic, and characterised philosophical thought as male, Sand moves on to discuss her own preoccupation with this issue, for she has dared to put down on paper her own 'pauvres réflexions'. But the sentence beginning 'Ce qu'il y a de plus curieux en ceci' again emphasises the masculine nature of such philosophical and theoretical thought, for although this subject has been a major theme in her literary work, she admits that, 'je sais à peine à quoi m'en tenir et ne m'étant jamais résumée, n'ayant jamais rien conclu que de très vague'. This lack of certainty, this latent unease working in an area that, unlike literature, has not been a natural one for her, might be understood in view of the fact that women did not theorise their own position or lot, for this was very much a male prerogative (one thinks of Rousseau's *L'Émile*, or Michelet's *La Femme*). This is also evident in Sand's novels, both up to 1837 when she wrote this letter and afterwards, for if the female characters, with the possible exception of Lélia, speak of their position in society or their suffering, it is invariably in a limited and personal perspective, and it is instead the male characters or narrative voice who generalise on female experience. And yet, continuing the analysis of this most revealing letter, one finds, in the latter part of this sentence, Sand speaking of the facility with which she has been able to write on this subject, using expressions such as 'conclure d'inspiration', 'sans pouvoir m'empêcher de conclure' and 'trouvant en moi je ne sais quelle certitude'. The emphasis on conclusive, definite opinions here contrasts strongly with the uncertainties and hesitations of previous sentences. Has Sand found the same natural facility for this type of writing as for the novelistic genre? Or does her emphasis on inspiration and on conclusion almost in spite of herself ('conclure d'inspiration sans trop savoir d'où cela me vient, sans savoir le moins du monde si je me trompe ou non') serve to distance herself from what she writes both because she does not profess to stand as the source of authority behind these ideas and because she does not claim for them the status of absolute truth? Given the ambiguity of the expression, it is difficult, if not impossible, to say with any authority whether this is to be read as a direct expression of Sand's position, or whether she stands at one remove from the content of *Lettres à Marcie*. The final



sentence of this paragraph, however, adds a new perspective to the complexities of this letter, for she writes: 'trouvant en moi je ne sais quelle certitude, qui est peut-être une voix de la vérité, et peut-être une voix impertinente de l'orgueil'. Whilst the play of assertion and distancing is maintained, the parameters are shifted, and the opposition becomes one of truth and pride. What is this 'voix de la vérité'? I would suggest that the vocabulary used here ('certitude', 'vérité') with its overtones of masculine reason, points to this being a male voice (and the links to the discourse of Théophile and Sylvestre will be evident in this text). This might also explain the distance Sand places between herself and this discourse. The voice of certainty that Sand has found within herself is in fact a male voice, the only voice recognised as having authority to address theoretical issues, and to generalise on the female condition. The distance Sand expresses towards this voice thus assumes significance for our reading of this novel, for she does not stand directly behind it as a guarantor of its authenticity, but instead portrays it as a discourse of which she does not feel totally in control, and questions its claim to the truth. Even more subversively she links this claim to pride and arrogance, for this voice which speaks with certainty is not characterised as *either* the holder of the truth *or* arrogant in its claims, but potentially both. It is as if any voice which would speak with authority on some sort of generalised female experience is not only alien to Sand, but any claim to absolute truth must be seen as arrogant and hence baseless. Considered from this perspective, the facility of writing which Sand experiences here is due not to the fact that she is directly voicing her own principles and convictions (indeed, given the constraints on the woman as writer in the nineteenth century, one might with some justification expect the opposite to be the case), but to the fact that the only possible discourse of authority on the subject of women was the male, patriarchal one.

Although Schor begins by emphasising the status of this text, which falls somewhere between novel and theoretical writing, her approach tends to see it simply as a feminist treatise. Indeed both she and Vareille read the above letter to Lamennais as proof that in *Lettres à Marcie*, to quote from Vareille, '[Sand] se trouvera amenée à se prononcer explicitement sur la condition féminine et les revendications des



«féministes» de son époque' (p. 391). Although Schor also sees here evidence that 'Sand n'est pas à l'aise dans son rôle de théoricienne, et surtout de théoricienne de la différence sexuelle' (p. 29), she does not take this argument further, and bases her reading instead on the equation of authorial and narrative voices in this text. It is true that there are undeniable similarities between certain passages of *Lettres à Marcie* and other of Sand's writings, but it is equally true that there are passages that one could only with difficulty ascribe to Sand in the spirit that they are written, and hence in the way that they are to be interpreted by Marcie (for it should not be forgotten that there is a specific addressee for these letters). These passages are mostly omitted or glossed over by these two critics. What I propose here is a reading which looks more closely at the information we are given on the character behind this voice, and which reflects on his discourse in the light of this information.

One important characteristic of this novel is the fact that it includes the letters written to Marcie, but none of the letters from this woman. This has two effects: it emphasises the discourse of Marcie's friend, and correspondingly places the woman in the position of silent object, acted on rather than acting. It is, however, possible to surmise what Marcie writes in her letters from the replies her confidant sends, as he often summarises her questions or problems before responding to them. Similarly, although we are given little information about Marcie's correspondent, details gleaned from the text establish him as an older man, both a husband and a father, who has travelled, and who is also, one assumes, someone whom Marcie respects since she has turned to him for help and advice. Whilst gender alone cannot fix his discourse as patriarchal, from what he says it becomes evident that his ideological position is influenced both by conservative and religious tendencies. Though not so authoritarian or unreasonable as was, for example, Colonel Delmare in *Indiana*, he may nonetheless be seen as a representative of the patriarchal order. But if Marcie's friend is not entirely sympathetic to demands for a change in women's condition, he does not appear unsympathetic to their plight either. It is this apparent double discourse in the text which is potentially misleading.

The first of these six letters is prompted by an expression of almost despair on Marcie's part, for her friend writes: 'Vous êtes triste, vous souffrez, l'ennui vous dévore' (p. 157). We learn in the course of this letter that Marcie's unhappiness can be attributed to the fact that she is not married, and to her perception that she will not be able to find a husband because she is poor, and consequently without a dowry. It is in the midst of this crisis that she writes to her older male friend in the hope that he will be able to give her advice, or help her through this difficult time. He replies by telling her not to despair, and by encouraging her to help cure herself. His initial comments suggest that she should adopt an active attitude towards her suffering, for he writes: 'Il faut que vous soyez à vous-même votre médecin, et que, par un régime hardi et généreux, vous rendiez à votre âme la santé qu'elle a perdue' (ibid.). This is reinforced when he encourages her, should she not be able to find a husband, to accept 'une voie d'exception sublime' (p. 161) in society. He also believes that she can raise herself above her sex by living without a husband, a figure who is nevertheless described as 'cet appui nécessaire aux femmes' (ibid.). Such expressions should alert the reader to the fact that this is not someone who is set on transforming the basis of society, but who instead subscribes to a certain conception of women and their 'natural' role in society. This is an impression which is confirmed when one realises that not only does the role of exception which the narrator suggests to Marcie remain vague, but also the apparent encouragement to activity soon transforms itself into an advocacy of passive acceptance of her fate. Significantly warning her away from these 'sectes nouvelles' (p. 163), which have called into question love, fidelity and virtue, he argues that in her role of sublime exception she will stand as an example to others that being unable to marry need not necessarily entail a regression into debauchery.<sup>61</sup> It is here that passivity is enshrined:

Protestez, Marcie, protestez en vous-même contre ces influences funestes: vous ne savez pas qu'un front sans tache peut arrêter la voûte croulante des cieux. Laissez aux hommes forts le soin de rebâtir leurs temples; vous, triste et chaste colombe, reconstruisez votre nid solitaire. (p. 164)

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<sup>61</sup> This reference to 'sectes nouvelles' designates principally the Saint-Simonians.

Not only does the narrator here affirm his acceptance of women's confinement to the private sphere through his opposition of 'temples' and 'nid', but also the role of exception which had remained singularly vague up to now appears to be reduced to the idea of sublime virtue. It is this notion of virtue, this idea of devotion and sacrifice, that will be developed in the course of the correspondence as part of the religious discourse of the 'ami'.

The influence of religion on Marcie's correspondent is evident not only in his discourse, but also in his use of parables to illustrate his arguments, and the novel contains two examples of this form. The first recounts the story of a young woman, who, although ugly, had the important quality of being rich, and who, at the insistence of her family, accepted marriage over withdrawal to a convent, after having been persuaded that her husband would not care about her lack of beauty, but would love her for her innate goodness. Unfortunately her marriage was far from happy, and as a result of the disdain of her husband, her health deteriorated and she soon died. This parable seems designed to show that marriage does not necessarily bring happiness, a message which the following parable will take one step further.

The second of these moral tales comes in response to Marcie's complaint that although she would like to '*atteindre à cette vertu tranquille et sereine*' (p. 166), she feels incapable of such devotion in society, for she can find no inspiration there. Against her desire for '*des grandes scènes de la nature et de l'air libre des voyages*' (ibid.), her friend argues that there are examples of greatness all around us, and instead of despising mankind, we should accept our duty towards others. At this point in his argument the narrator introduces the parable. The story revolves around three sisters, without parents and without fortune, who live with their uncle, and who have come to accept the fact that because of their status they will be unable to find husbands worthy of them. But the youngest of the sisters, Arpalice, is courted by, and falls in love with, a rich and seemingly perfect young man. Faced with the jealousy this might provoke in her sisters, and the disruption this would bring to their almost idyllic life, she rejects his love and submits her desires to the general well-being

of those around her. It seems clear that Marcie's correspondent is trying to show that marriage need not be the only route to happiness, and that sacrifice and devotion can compensate for the lack of a husband without compromising the importance of virtue which he stressed in his first letter. It also seems to me significant that if this parable is set up as an example (a fact which he later denies on p. 209), then it endorses a perception of the ideal woman as one who is non-desiring, and who resigns herself to a fate mapped out by others.

In the general thrust of these letters, especially the second, there is little that could be considered feminist. It is only in the third letter that the question of feminism is explicitly raised. This letter, which is the longest of the six, is written in response to Marcie's reaction to the story of Arpalice, revealed in the opening paragraph of her friend's letter. Although Marcie appears to aspire to the kind of devotion and sacrifice that he has been preaching, she does not see in her life the same kind of compensations for this abnegation as had Arpalice. Her rejection of her friend's advice is implicit in what he writes:

Chère Marcie, je sais que vos souffrances ne sont point imaginaires [. . .]. Mais n'aggravez pas votre mal, je vous en supplie, par une fausse appréciation de vous-même et des choses extérieures. Je vous vois maintenant prendre le dessus, remporter la victoire sur les passions de la femme; mais en même temps que j'admire ce courage, je suis effrayé de vous entendre maudire la condition de votre sexe en ce qu'elle a précisément de meilleur et de plus sagement établi. Vous voudriez donner le change à vos souffrances par l'enivrement de l'action. Vous vous croyez propre à un rôle d'homme dans la société, et vous trouvez la société fort injuste de vous le refuser. (pp. 179-80)

The more vigorous response announced here sets the tone for the rest of the letter, and it is already clear that Marcie's desire to leave behind what he perceives to be her duty as a woman has touched a nerve. This letter will try to combat Marcie's complaints about the female condition and her desire for a more active life by glorifying the feminine and attacking women's groups.

What is particularly revealing in this letter is Marcie's correspondent's strong reaction to her understanding of this vague role of 'exception sublime', which he has encouraged her to adopt. She has understood this to entail a moving away from traditional female roles and towards more active, male roles, but this is clearly not the meaning he intended to convey. This letter re-asserts the importance of feminine qualities and the sanctity of traditional gender roles, notably those of wife and mother, which are of course precisely the ones denied to Marcie. Initially at least, his primary motivation in this letter is not to offer practical help to Marcie, but to ensure that she combat these pernicious tendencies, that she returns to the feminine sphere allotted to her. The first part of his argument is based on attacking contemporary feminists, who, he says, 'ont donné d'assez tristes preuves de l'impuissance de leur raisonnement' (p. 181). This is particularly revealing, since it continues a long tradition of thought which problematises women's relation to logical reasoning, and sees in their biological specificity a justification for their intellectual inferiority, thus preserving 'raisonnement' as a male domain. However, Marcie's friend appears not to be completely hostile to 'ce qu'on appelle aujourd'hui la cause des femmes' (p. 182), and he accepts that women are treated unjustly, and that they have a right to 'plus de respect, plus d'estime et d'intérêt de la part des hommes' (ibid.). But this is soon qualified by the following observation:

Mais cet avenir est entre leurs mains. Les hommes seront un jour à leur égard ce qu'elles les feront: confiants quand elles seront dignes de confiance, généreux et fidèles lorsque, dans leurs âmes aigries, de folles exigences ou d'injustes révoltes ne refouleront pas tout bon mouvement. (ibid.)

This argument is reminiscent of one used by the narrator of *Indiana* when blaming Indiana for the way the authoritarian Delmare treated her. Once again, not only are the weak blamed for their own inferior position, but, because of their attempts to break out of that position, they are also held responsible for the reaction of their male masters. There is even an implication here that if women were to remain dutifully feminine, men would be more likely to be favourable to their demands for an improvement in their status. What is demanded of women is submission and

acquiescence, which, according to this man's logic, will eventually result in their liberation. Given the specious nature of this argument, the narrator's assertion that certain women have shown the 'impuissance de leur raisonnement' (ibid.) becomes rather ironic.

The attack on women's movements continues as Marcie's friend plays down the number of women who would wish to take on a public role and to be involved in politics, arguing that 'le nombre n'en est pas grand' (p. 183), and that it would be folly for society to change to accommodate this 'petit nombre de prodiges' (p. 184). His conclusion to Marcie on the subject of the demands of these feminist groups is revealing in its formulation: 'sachez vous effacer, sachez vous anéantir plutôt que de désirer, pour satisfaire un besoin personnel, que le genre humain fasse un acte de démente' (ibid.). Aside from the obvious insistence on an ideal of submissive, non-desiring femininity, the implication is that any deviation from acceptable gender norms would constitute an act of madness. Marcie's correspondent now moves increasingly away from a discussion of what women should not do or be towards a discussion of their proper duties. He warns:

Les femmes ne sont pas propres aux emplois que jusqu'ici les lois leur ont déniés. Ce qui ne prouve nullement l'infériorité de leur intelligence, mais la différence de leur éducation et de leur caractère: ce premier empêchement pourra cesser avec le temps; le second sera, je pense, éternel. (p. 184)

Now whilst this insight may appear entirely reasonable, and even share certain points in common with ideas on difference that have been coming through in my analysis of Sand's novels thus far, it is important to bear in mind that within the patriarchal system, difference will generally equal inequality.<sup>62</sup> This valorisation of the eternal feminine can only hold feminist potential if it is inscribed within an order other than the patriarchal. However, for Marcie's correspondent, this eternal feminine is the product of a religious discourse which is also at the basis of his patriarchal ideology.

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<sup>62</sup> In an interview with *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Michelle Perrot argues that 'dès que les femmes affirment leur différence, les hommes tendent à les enfermer dans l'infériorité' (quoted in Schor, 'Le Féminisme et George Sand', p. 34, note 20).



It is this religious discourse on women that now assumes greater prominence, and, having stressed previously that the cause of humanity's degradation was its lack of virtue ('si nous sommes avilis, c'est que nous n'avons pas la force de la vertu', p. 182), he now eulogises women's personification of the Christian spirit, and the Christian qualities which they embody are seen to be essential to the 'règne de Dieu' (p. 165) which he advocates as a solution to the problems of society. He writes in this letter of women's qualities:

Le cœur des femmes sera le sanctuaire de l'amour, de la mansuétude, du dévouement, de la patience, de la miséricorde, en un mot des reflets les plus doux de la divinité et des inspirations indestructibles de l'Évangile. Ce sont elles qui nous conserveront à travers les siècles les traditions de la sublime philosophie chrétienne. (p. 184)

If women may be seen to embody feminine qualities, immutable throughout time, these qualities are religious and Christian, and as such remain patriarchal. This 'règne de Dieu' that Marcie's mentor wishes to see re-established on earth will not be the matriarchal society that the emphasis on the mythical feminine might imply, but rather an ordered patriarchal society, not dissimilar to the contemporary one, but more virtuous and less corrupt. Unlike the 'feminine' utopia glimpsed in certain of Sand's novels, it will not go beyond the gender divisions of patriarchal society, but will instead adhere more strictly to gender norms which he feels are being violated in society. It is the naturalness and universality of these divisions that he next emphasises, and in the course of this analysis he will show how an emphasis on difference between the sexes leads to inequality in the patriarchal system.

For Marcie's correspondent, the nature of woman is fixed around the concepts of love and maternity, but these are not valued equally. Whereas the lover is seen as 'passionnée, inégale, fantasque, souvent sublime, souvent injuste et souvent infortunée' (p. 186), the mother is 'toute équité, toute bonté, toute sérénité' (ibid.). This maternal instinct is therefore the defining quality of the ideal woman:

Elle se sent revêtue [...] d'une mission divine. Elle transmet la vie, et, n'importe la valeur de l'être qu'elle a mis au jour, elle le protège et le conserve. Là est sa grandeur, là est sa gloire. Qu'elle ne cherche pas les

joies étrangères, car elles lui feraient négliger la première de toutes. (p. 186)

Whilst the maternal function in its privileging of devotion, caring and nurturing could be the basis of a new social order which would move away from the domination and authority of the Law of the Father, here the fact that women are defined by motherhood actually reinforces the current social order, and specifically the division of society into public and private spheres. Men, Marcie's correspondent argues, get less satisfaction from children than women since they cannot experience the joys of motherhood, so they must attach more importance to life beyond the family, to the public sphere. Here they will seek fulfilment, whereas 'la mère est moins occupée de la grande famille humaine et de l'avenir des idées que de la vie matérielle des êtres nés de son sein' (p. 188), and for her fulfilment is gained through devotion to family duties. The social division between public and private spheres thus reflects the 'natural' division of the sexes in this man's opinion. But it is precisely this which perpetuates inequality in patriarchal society, for it is the public sphere which is valorised, a fact which is evident in the contrast established in the previous quotation between man's preoccupation with 'la grande famille humaine' (ibid.) and woman's concern for the material existence of her children. In the eyes of Marcie's correspondent, this is an immutable order:

Ainsi le rôle de chaque sexe est tracé, sa tâche lui est assignée, et la Providence donne à chacun les instruments et les ressources qui lui sont propres. Pourquoi la société renverserait-elle *cet ordre admirable*, et comment remédierait-elle à la corruption qui s'y est glissée, en intervertissant *l'ordre naturel*, en donnant à la femme les mêmes attributions qu'à l'homme? (p. 188, my italics)

The only change he can imagine to this social order would be one which would corrupt this natural division as a result of women's attempts to usurp the position of the male. The basic message of what Marcie's friend writes is that she must not seek to transgress the boundaries of the private, and her aspirations must be towards marriage and a family, rather than 'les hallucinations de la vanité féminine' (p. 189). He appears to forget that Marcie's original problem was caused precisely by the

practical problems which stood in the way of her finding a husband and taking on the role of wife and mother, though he again asserts that if she does not find the joys of a family, she will have 'un rôle d'exception' which will be 'une mission de vierge et d'ange' (p. 190). In any case, she must preserve herself from the impurities of the public sphere and wait for 'la manifestation de la volonté divine' (ibid.).

It is this divine will and the divine ordering of society which Marcie appears to question in her next letter, for her friend begins his reply thus:

Dans un siècle sans foi et sans crainte, lorsque soi-même on est entraîné par l'esprit d'examen et de doute, il est impossible, dites-vous, de trouver dans le vague des idées religieuses la consolation et la force que nos pères puisaient dans un dogme absolu. (pp. 191-92)

His fourth letter will concentrate on this lack of religious faith in society, and the fact that it has led to a loss of order and to a lack of morality, for there is no longer a 'fond solide' (p. 194) to society. It is also a plea for Marcie to keep her faith, and an expression of his hope that society will in the future be built again on the principles of the Gospel. In this long discussion of religion, it becomes clear that this man's view of society is strongly conditioned by his religious principles, and that he attributes the corruption of society, evidenced for him by the transgression of gender roles, to a generalised religious scepticism and lack of respect for the God-given order.

In his next letter, however, he is forced to dampen the religious enthusiasm which his rhetoric has awoken in Marcie, who is now talking of becoming a nun. But this, he says, was not his intention, and he states categorically: 'jamais ma pensée n'a été de vous amener à un renoncement éternel' (p. 204). One can certainly forgive Marcie for assuming that this was one of the paths open to her should marriage and motherhood be denied her, especially in light of his exhortation to religious faith. The other course of action which she is considering, that is a non-religious 'vœu d'abstinence' (p. 207), appears equally abhorrent to him, and he calls on her to be patient and wait for a suitable man to come along, and in the meantime to have faith in God's will: 'je vois dans votre avenir beaucoup de fondement à réaliser ces espérances de mariage et de

maternité que je n'appellerai pas vaines, car elles sont justes et saintes, et Dieu sans doute les exaucera' (ibid.). Later in his letter he insists that the parable of Arpalice was designed to show her 'quelles douceurs peut offrir le célibat quand on a de fortes raisons pour s'y dévouer' (p. 209), but claims that 'ces raisons n'existent pas pour vous' (ibid.). In this letter it finally becomes clear that despite his assertions that there are possibilities for the single woman in society, her duty is to seek to become a wife and a mother, as ultimately this is the only possibility open to her. Certainly Marcie's correspondent seeks to dissuade her from all other choices.

By this stage I think one can typify this correspondent's attitude towards women as that of a patriarchal male who is convinced of the naturalness of men occupying the public sphere in society and women the private. He subscribes to the view that women are defined essentially by their maternal instinct, and although he is aware of the injustices done to them, he does not approve of their transgressing gender boundaries in order to seek redress for these injustices. This being the case, his final letter seems somewhat out of place, since in it he discusses women's right not only to be educated, but also to study philosophy and hence to contribute to what Luce Irigaray calls 'le discours des discours'<sup>63</sup> of the patriarchal order. He writes: 'Je sais que certains préjugés refusent aux femmes le don d'une volonté susceptible d'être éclairée, l'exercice d'une persévérance raisonnée' (p. 213). This is a prejudice from which he distances himself, yet in his third letter he too accused certain women who had sought to reason against the injustice of their position in society of having revealed 'l'impuissance de leur raisonnement' (p. 181). Although he accepts that women are capable of reason, when they argue against patriarchal truths, when they overstep the limits, their ability to reason is questioned.

Furthermore, since for him women must not seek to disturb the division of public and private spheres, he sees education as a means of confirming their place in the private, domestic sphere. This becomes clear when he criticises the 'déplorable éducation' (p.

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<sup>63</sup> Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, p. 72.

215) given to women, and argues that men have built their superiority on this reduction of women to ignorance. Education, he seems to say, would allow women to understand better their place in society and their role in the family, and they would then willingly submit to the authority of their husband as 'maître aimé et accepté' (p. 216). None of this appears particularly in contradiction with the position he has adopted earlier until he describes the basis on which women were deprived education:

L'homme a dû trouver un moyen de détruire en elle le sentiment de la force morale, afin de régner sur elle par le seul fait de la force brutale; il fallait étouffer son intelligence ou la laisser inculte. C'est le parti qui a été pris. Le seul secours moral laissé à la femme fut la religion, et l'homme, s'affranchissant de ses devoirs civils et religieux, *trouva bien que la femme gardât le précepte chrétien de souffrir et se taire.* (ibid., my italics)

Despite his attempts to appear more enlightened than his peers, his position is hardly removed from theirs, for the final part of this passage reflects entirely the message of his fifth letter when he encourages Marcie to submit to God's will and asks her to be patient in her suffering: 'Allez, la souffrance est bonne, la douleur est sainte quand on sait les accepter comme des épreuves venant d'en haut' (p. 210). Although he tries to distance himself from the patriarchal ideology of male superiority, his own ideas are but another means of expressing this.

It is the glorification of the feminine and the criticism of participation by women in politics that one finds in this text (principally in the third and sixth letters) that critics posit as the essence of Sand's position on feminism. Certainly there are numerous instances of both these themes in Sand's writing, and the valorisation of the feminine that she effects in her writing is important (and will be discussed further in Part Three of this thesis). In her article on *Lettres à Marcie*, Schor shows how the valorisation of the feminine effected in this third letter reflects current feminist preoccupations in France, in which the feminine is seen as a 'réserve de valeurs morales autres et supérieures' (p. 34). It is from this position that she understands Sand's discourse in this novel: the feminine must not become contaminated with masculine characteristics through participation in the public world, but instead must affirm the separation of



spheres and preserve its own values. In the context of this argument, Schor quotes from Vareille's analysis, and this quotation can be seen to summarise both their positions, for Vareille writes:

Loin de confirmer et de consolider un système inique en aspirant à s'y intégrer, les femmes devraient donc conserver précieusement leur marginalité, qui devient ainsi le signe visible d'un changement inévitable, l'indice de la nécessité de créer une société fondée sur de nouveaux principes. Tout se passe donc comme si, en refusant son adhésion aux revendications en apparence les plus radicales des féministes de son époque, Sand tenait [. . .] à conserver à la marginalité féminine une fonction de mise en question radicale de la société existante. (pp. 410-11, quoted by Schor, p. 33)

However, if this quotation may be an adequate statement of Schor's position, it is not a complete summary of Vareille's arguments, even if it does come towards the end of her analysis of *Lettres à Marcie*. Vareille tries to bring Sand's position somewhat closer to the reforming elements in feminism, to those who demand material change in women's position in society. This tendency is made clear in a footnote to the above quotation, inserted after 'sur de nouveaux principes', in which she writes:

Précisons cependant que cette valorisation de la marginalité féminine ne signifie nullement que les femmes doivent aux yeux de Sand se cantonner dans le «féminin». Tout au contraire, les analyses qui précèdent l'auront suffisamment fait ressortir, la femme doit dépasser ce que la société de l'époque considère comme le domaine de la femme afin de réaliser sa plénitude d'être humain *et* de femme. (pp. 410-11, note 104)

Vareille tries not to isolate Sand completely from the feminist movement of her day, and ascribes to her some of their more practical aspirations. She argues this point on the basis of a quotation from the third letter of *Lettres à Marcie* in which Marcie's correspondent wrote:

Qu'elles agrandissent leur âme et qu'elles élèvent leur intelligence avant d'espérer faire fléchir le cercle de fer de la coutume. En vain elles se rassembleront en clubs, en vain elles engageront des polémiques, si l'expression même de leur mécontentement prouve qu'elles sont incapables de bien gérer leurs affaires et de bien gouverner leurs affections. (p. 182, quoted in Vareille, p. 405)



For Vareille, this quotation shows that, 'le «problème féminin» se réduit donc pour Sand essentiellement à un problème d'éducation' (p. 405), and that 'l'émancipation politique des femmes et leur accès aux professions libérales sont donc dans l'esprit de Sand étroitement reliés à cette réforme de leur éducation' (ibid.). Not only is it highly debateable that this quotation from the third letter, taken in context, contains even an implicit demand for the education of women (certainly it is not followed up by an explicit demand), but also the claim that Marcie's correspondent (and by extension in Vareille's eyes, Sand) supports women's insertion into the system sits rather badly with what follows in the third letter and also with Vareille's own analysis of the discourse of the mythical feminine. It seems that for Vareille it is necessary not to separate Sand from the feminists of her time, and this leads her to make claims which are difficult to support from the text. If it is possible to read this letter as a glorification of the mythical feminine and as promising a society in the future built on principles other than the patriarchal ones enshrined in contemporary society, it is difficult to see how it also leaves the way open for women's participation in society, for so great is its insistence on the rigid separation of public and masculine, private and feminine spheres.

In the context of the debates on Sand's feminism which have grown up around *Lettres à Marcie*, it is interesting to compare the ideas in this text to those expressed by Sand in her now infamous letter 'Aux membres du Comité Central' of 1848. There are certainly points of contact between the two texts, for in her letter Sand condemns women's participation in politics, emphasises the sanctity of marriage and criticises inequalities in society, in particular as they affect women. Nevertheless there are three fundamental differences which should be noted. Firstly, the position of enunciation in Sand's letter is more explicitly feminine and shows greater solidarity with the cause of women. On a number of occasions Sand places herself explicitly on the side of women ('je demande pardon aux personnes de mon sexe'<sup>64</sup>) and emphasises that she

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<sup>64</sup> Sand, *Correspondance*, VIII (1971), 401. Whilst this 'mon sexe' might be considered to be ambiguous given Sand's frequent adoption of a masculine voice in her letters (not to mention her androgynous pseudonym and male attire), the context of this remark makes it more clearly feminine.

feels implicated in 'la cause de [s]on sexe' (p. 407). Secondly, Sand does not insist in this letter on the rigid and eternal division of society into public and private spheres, and she does not reject the possibility that women might one day play a role in the political sphere. Although Sand is severe in her criticism of the feminist movements of the time, she nonetheless allows women the possibility of undertaking reforming activity, whereas the male voice of *Lettres à Marcie* positions women strictly in the private and domestic sphere. Moreover, Sand's prediction of the way men will react to feminist demands corresponds exactly to the reaction of Marcie's correspondent. She writes: 'On voit que vous demandez d'emblée l'exercice des droits politiques, on croit que vous demandez encore autre chose, la liberté des passions et, dès lors, on repousse toute idée de réforme' (p. 408). Indeed, as soon as Marcie's male friend addresses the question of contemporary movements which have aroused the interest of women, and particularly the Saint-Simonians, he immediately evokes the spectre of immorality, of the freedom of passions, and thus rejects the validity of their arguments.

The third and final difference between Sand's discourse in this letter and that of the letter writer in *Lettres à Marcie* concerns this man's refusal to consider a reform of society which would distance it from certain conservative and Christian values. Sand, however, advocates a radical transformation of society in order to overcome injustices done to women, and writes: 'pour que la condition des femmes soit ainsi transformée, il faut que la société soit transformée radicalement' (p. 401). This radical transformation would begin with equality for women in society and in marriage. Whilst in this letter Sand emphasises the social and political realities of the time, she evinces little attachment to the structures of this society and adopts a revolutionary position non-existent in *Lettres à Marcie*.

If the comparison between these two texts tends to confirm the reactionary side to *Lettres à Marcie*, what importance should one accord to the circumstances surrounding the publication of this text? The dispute with Lamennais and the fact that Sand wrote to him that she wanted to address the issue of divorce have often been

interpreted as signalling the radical and feminist content of the text. As the manuscript no longer exists, we cannot know the content of the passages in the third letter which were cut by Lamennais. What one can affirm, however, with a degree of certainty, is that nothing in the published text even suggests the presence of revolutionary intent. However, a change of tone is also undoubtedly evident from the fourth letter on: the discourse becomes more abstract, more religious, more removed from Marcie's problems. This change of tone immediately follows the dispute between Sand and Lamennais, and may well be read as the consequence of their exchange of letters.

It is certain that Sand appreciated neither Lamennais's editorial intervention nor his letter forbidding her from addressing the question of divorce. He wrote to her that 'une question morale et politique si grave [. . .] ne doit être résolue ni traitée en passant' and that 'il y aurait mille inconvénients de toute sorte à la remuer dans un journal'.<sup>65</sup> He closes this letter by saying to her: 'Vous n'avez qu'à ouvrir la main, il en tombera des fleurs charmantes' (ibid.). This leads Vareille to conclude that Lamennais 'fait bon marché de Sand en tant qu'intellect et conscience morale' and that 'Sand fait ainsi une expérience de plus de la misogynie pratique qui caractérise les hommes - même les plus distingués - de son époque' (pp. 495-96). A letter from Sand to Alphonse Fleury in 1844 proves that Sand was indeed hurt by these remarks: '[Lamennais] me demandait de la littérature sans idées, de la philosophie sans conclusion. Envoyez-moi des fleurs, me disait-il, et ne me compromettez pas'.<sup>66</sup> It seems to me that this incident not only delayed publication of the next instalment of *Lettres à Marcie*, but also influenced its content. It is known that when Sand began to write this text her admiration for Lamennais was strong. In 1835 she wrote to him: 'Aux jours de mon plus grand scepticisme, vous fûtes toujours la seule émanation divine, revêtue de chair, que mes doutes respectèrent, l'esprit de négation qui s'était logé en moi, ne voulut pas s'attaquer à vous'.<sup>67</sup> She explains later in this letter that it

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<sup>65</sup> Lamennais, *Correspondance générale*, VI (1977), 158.

<sup>66</sup> Sand, *Correspondance*, VI (1969), 486.

<sup>67</sup> Sand, *Correspondance*, III (1967), 187.

(ibid.), though one senses here a more general desire to submit herself to his opinions and to make known, through her writing, ideas which had been such a great consolation for her. Might *Lettres à Marcie* have been the work which was to have this function? The fact of writing for *Le Monde* would have been an opportunity to offer to Lamennais this text which was to express her gratitude and respect. The first two letters could easily be seen as part of such a project. The dispute with Lamennais about the content of the third letter might then have revealed to Sand the limits of his philosophy: that is, this revolutionary priest, this defender of the people and of the weak, had particularly reactionary ideas on the subject of women. The final three letters might then be read as expressing a certain element of disillusionment on Sand's part.

There is, however, some doubt as to whether the fourth of these letters was written before or after Sand received Lamennais's letter. Peter Byrne states that Sand sent this fourth letter to Lamennais on February 28th, the day after the publication of the edited third letter, and two days before she wrote to Lamennais to question the limits placed on her as a writer.<sup>68</sup> Eric Paquin, on the other hand, argues that none of the final three letters was written before Sand received Lamennais's reply.<sup>69</sup> Marie d'Agoult, in a letter to Liszt dated the 12th March 1837, writes that: 'de plus, on n'a pas inséré sa quatrième lettre',<sup>70</sup> thus indicating that this fourth letter had been sent off for publication in time for the early March edition of the newspaper. Given this information, we may wonder whether the timescale was sufficient for the fourth of these *Lettres à Marcie* to have been written, and sent to Paris, between Sand's receipt of Lamennais's letter of 2nd March and the next edition of *Le Monde*. In any event, the fourth letter is certainly a reaction against Lamennais's editorial intervention, if not against the content of his letter.

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<sup>68</sup> Peter Byrne, 'George Sand, Marcie, Lamennais and *Le Monde*', *Friends of George Sand Newsletter*, 4.1 (1981), 36-38 (p. 36). I have not been able to find any evidence to support the date Byrne attributes to this fourth letter.

<sup>69</sup> Paquin, 'Le problème éditorial et formel d'un roman épistolaire inachevé/inachevable, les *Lettres à Marcie*', p. 121.

<sup>70</sup> Sand, *Correspondance*, III (1967), 714, note 1.

It is, however, in the sixth letter that the indignation which Sand experienced on reading Lamennais's letter seems to surface most clearly. Although Marcie's correspondent acknowledges that women can study philosophy, he defines this not as a reflection on the general principles of knowledge, but as 'amour de la sagesse', which, he says, was its 'sens primitif' (p. 212). In other words, women philosophers were not to treat the same serious questions as their male counterparts. The position of Marcie's correspondent thus comes to resemble that of Lamennais in his letter to Sand asking her for 'des fleurs charmantes',<sup>71</sup> and not for serious commentary on contemporary issues. These letters might therefore constitute a veiled criticism of Lamennais insofar as they underline the reactionary aspect of his philosophy.<sup>72</sup>

The misogyny of Lamennais in fact often appears in his writings, and one can establish parallels between his ideas and those of Marcie's friend. In *Discussions critiques et pensées diverses sur la religion et la philosophie*, published in 1842, Lamennais argues that the intellectual inferiority of women is a fact of nature: 'en fait de raison, de logique [. . .] la femme, même la plus supérieure, atteint rarement à la hauteur d'un homme de médiocre capacité. L'éducation peut être en cela pour quelque chose, mais le fond de la différence est dans celle des natures'.<sup>73</sup> When Sand writes to him and criticises his negative position towards women, he defends himself and argues that women are different from men, and also superior to them: 'Le Christianisme veut Dieu en haut, l'humanité en dessous, et entre l'humanité et Dieu, qui place-t-elle [sic]? La femme'.<sup>74</sup> Like Marcie's correspondent, he thus criticises women's ability to reason and praises them as the incarnation of the Christian spirit. But these are not the only parallels one can establish between these two men: the mixture of progressive ideas and religion, of a radical attitude towards certain issues and a conservative one

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<sup>71</sup> Lamennais, *Correspondance générale*, VI (1977), 158.

<sup>72</sup> Vareille reads in the fourth letter of *Lettres à Marcie* an implicit criticism of Lamennais, but does not establish any link with the dispute which followed publication of the third letter (see *Socialité, sexualité et les impasses de l'histoire*, pp. 342-43).

<sup>73</sup> Lamennais, *Discussions critiques et pensées diverses sur la religion et la philosophie* in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Louis le Guillou, vol. 11 (Geneva: Slatkine, 1981), quoted by Vareille in *Socialité, sexualité et les impasses de l'histoire*, p. 511.

<sup>74</sup> Lamennais, *Correspondance générale*, VIII (1981), 79.

towards others, which one finds in *Lettres à Marcie* is also characteristic of the work of Lamennais, about whom Sand had written in 1836: 'Il y a encore en lui [. . .] beaucoup plus du prêtre que je ne croyais'.<sup>75</sup>

Such a reading can explain the mix of progressive and reactionary discourses to be found in *Lettres à Marcie*, at the same time as it questions the idea that the story of the publication of this text proves its feminist value. Closer analysis of *Lettres à Marcie* leads one to conclude that the conservative, religious and anti-feminist views of Marcie's correspondent render him an unsuitable mouthpiece for the author. Far from being the expression of a radical and utopian feminism which valorises the subversive potential of women's occupation of the private sphere, this is a text which expresses a rather more patriarchal view of this sphere. However, the distance established between Sand and this narrative voice makes possible a feminist reading of the text. Naomi Schor suggests that the uncertainties and contradictions in *Lettres à Marcie* prove that Sand was not 'à l'aise dans son rôle de théoricienne',<sup>76</sup> whilst Kristina Vareille argues that 'les contradictions, les malaises mêmes de ce texte constituent en réalité un impérieux appel à des réformes bien plus radicales que celles qu'il réclame explicitement'.<sup>77</sup> It seems to me rather that this text questions both the authority of those (men) who set themselves up as theoreticians of femininity, and also the validity of theories which perpetuate injustices done to women in patriarchal society. Hence it is through a fictional text that Sand exposes the male subject of theory.

#### (iv) '*Elle et Lui*': Defining the Other

There is an interesting, if rather unlikely comparison to be drawn between *Lettres à Marcie* and *Elle et Lui* (1859). The similarity between these two texts goes much further than the repetition of analogous themes (the moral superiority of women, the

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<sup>75</sup> Sand, *Correspondance*, III (1967), 401.

<sup>76</sup> Schor, 'Le féminisme et George Sand', p. 29.

<sup>77</sup> Vareille, *Socialité, sexualité et les impasses de l'histoire*, p. 408.



emphasis on the maternal, the position of the unmarried woman in society), which to some extent run through all of Sand's works. *Elle et Lui* can in fact be read as an illustration of the theoretical discourse of Marcie's correspondent. Such a contention runs counter to the autobiographical approach which has largely dominated readings of this novel, and for which Sand's affair with Musset, particularly the Venice episode, constitutes the privileged intertext. The 1963 Ides et Calendes edition of the novel is typical in this respect, for its editor, Henri Guillemin, includes an introduction (almost as long as the text itself) which recounts in detail the Sand-Musset liaison.<sup>78</sup> Joseph Barry adopts a similar (though less anti-Sand) perspective in his preface to the 1986 Aurore edition, and writes: '«Elle» est George Sand. «Lui» est Alfred de Musset'.<sup>79</sup> There can of course be little doubt that there are autobiographical sources to the novel, a fact which Sand herself did not deny. Indeed, in a letter dated 16th February 1859 (one month after the publication of the first instalment of *Elle et Lui*), she refers to her relationship with Musset, and uses the signifiers *elle* and *lui* to designate the two partners in the couple. She writes for example: 'Lorsque la rupture entre *elle* et *lui* fut un fait accompli, les lettres qu'on s'était écrites de part et d'autre furent rassemblées et on convint de les brûler ensemble'.<sup>80</sup> She concludes:

Il sera facile de constater *que pas une ligne de cette correspondance* n'a été reproduite dans le roman d'*Elle et Lui*, et que, pourtant, les souvenirs de l'auteur ont été fidèles pour tout ce qui tient aux sentiments mutuels et au caractère de leur liaison. (p. 325, italics in original)

The acknowledgement of an autobiographical source is clear, as is the affirmation that the overall representation of the nature of the relationship is a faithful one. But Sand also states that this novel is not to be read as a factual account of her affair with Musset. Only the 'sentiments' and the 'caractère' of their relationship are represented faithfully; the events of the plot are not accorded the same status. She writes to Saint-Beuve on this subject a few years later: 'c'est une histoire vraie au fond [. . .], et qui

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<sup>78</sup> George Sand, *Elle et Lui*, ed. by Henri Guillemin (Neuchâtel: Ides et Calendes, 1963).

<sup>79</sup> George Sand, *Elle et Lui*, ed. by Thierry Bodin with a preface by Joseph Barry (Meylan: Éditions de l'Aurore, 1986), p. 5. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.

<sup>80</sup> Sand, *Correspondance*, XV (1981), 323 (italics in original).

avait été si arrangée par certaines gens, que j'ai cru devoir lui restituer ce que la réalité des sentiments avait d'essentiel, tout en déguisant assez bien les faits et les personnages pour que nul n'eût le droit de s'en plaindre'.<sup>81</sup> As such, *Elle et Lui* becomes Sand's *fictionalised* representation of real events, rather than an obviously and intentionally autobiographical piece of writing. In the same letter to Sainte-Beuve, she insists on the role that memory and art, rather than authentic documents, played in the creation of *Elle et Lui*. Speaking of herself in the third person, she writes:

Il n'entrait pas dans sa manière de voir, au point de vue de l'art, pas plus qu'à celui des convenances, de *citer* et de *copier*. Elle devait écrire elle-même son livre, ne pas imiter le style d'un autre, même pour le faire parler, elle devait rendre les idées et les sentiments de l'un et de l'autre comme elle se les rappelait et comme elle les appréciait à distance. Ce n'était pas des mémoires qu'elle rédigeait, c'était un roman, c'était de l'émotion rétrospective et sa propre émotion. (p. 247, italics in original)

Consideration of the status of the narrator in *Elle et Lui* adds some weight to this affirmation of the text's status as fiction, since there is none of the correspondence between author, narrator and character necessary to fulfil the conditions of Lejeune's *pacte autobiographique*.<sup>82</sup> The narrator of this text, for instance, is never given an identity, and is certainly to be distinguished from the female protagonist. Where the autobiographical side to this novel is most evident is in the portrayal of a difficult and painful relationship, and of a period when the heroine had begun a new life as an independent woman and as an artist, since these correspond most clearly to aspects of Sand's own life at the time of her relationship with Musset. If we then read the novel not as a thinly-veiled account of the events of the author's tumultuous relationship with Musset, but as a fictional text drawing on real, lived experience, the signifiers 'Elle' and 'Lui' can be freed from the fixity of meaning the autobiographical reading imposes on them, and the novel can be read as a more general reflection on men's and women's roles in society, and on relations between the sexes.

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<sup>81</sup> Sand, *Correspondance*, XVI (1981), 243.

<sup>82</sup> Philippe Lejeune, *Le Pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975). See pp. 14-15 for Lejeune's definition of an autobiographical narrative.

It is as a result of such an approach that the parallels between *Lettres à Marcie* and *Elle et Lui* become apparent, for both texts deal with the problems facing unmarried and independent women in society. But more than this, both texts are also characterised by a similar narrative discourse. This will no doubt appear to be a surprising contention given the patriarchal ideology which I argue underlies *Lettres à Marcie*, and in light of the clearly critical presentation of Laurent and the corresponding extolling of Thérèse's virtues in *Elle et Lui*. Yet despite the feminine perspective that may be seen to shape this novel, the narrative discourse remains a masculine and patriarchal one. Certainly the narrator of *Elle et Lui* is less obtrusive than the narrator of *Indiana*, and the tendency to moralise and make value judgements which had characterised the narrative interventions of the earlier novel is much diminished. For this reason it is perhaps tempting to see the narrative perspective as a neutral one, but this is a neutrality which must be called into question. Whilst at no point in *Elle et Lui* does the narrator 'become flesh', his use of the first-person plural seems to align him with a male social position. Early in the novel the narrator's use of the 'nous' places him on the side of 'des artistes français' (p. 67), which might be seen to point to a narrative position close to that of the author. This is, however, undermined when the supposedly inclusive 'nous' is next used in a comment on Laurent:

Il était arrivé à ce moment de fatigue morale où l'âme est rassasiée d'enthousiasme, où l'être farouche et faible que nous sommes tous plus ou moins a besoin de reprendre possession de lui-même. [...] Il y avait sept jours entiers qu'il ne s'était appartenu; il subissait le besoin de se reconquérir et de se croire seul et indompté un instant. (pp. 88-89)

With his sense of self threatened, the narrator seems to imply that Laurent's reaction, his 'besoin de se reconquérir' (ibid.) is justified, and his use of the 'nous' form emphasises this as a natural human reaction. But such a truism on human nature is not extended to Thérèse, whose natural devotion (precisely her apparent lack of need to reclaim her independence) is stressed. It is particularly noticeable that Thérèse's conception of her freedom is presented rather differently from that of Laurent:

Elle se faisait une haute idée de la liberté morale, et quand l'amour et la foi d'autrui lui faisaient banqueroute, elle avait le juste orgueil de ne pas disputer lambeau par lambeau le pacte déchiré. Elle se plaisait même alors à l'idée de rendre généreusement et sans reproche l'indépendance et le repos à qui les réclamait. (p. 162)

Although Thérèse is not portrayed as being representative of women in general, she is nonetheless presented as an ideal of womanhood, and her (maternal) devotion is continually stressed as one of her qualities. Her idea of 'liberté morale' thus characteristically becomes one which is submissive to the desires of others. When Laurent speaks of his 'liberté morale' it is in a rather more selfish vein. He says to Thérèse: 'Ma liberté morale est chose sacrée et je ne permets à personne de s'en emparer. Je vous l'avais confiée et non donnée, c'était à vous d'en faire bon usage et de savoir me rendre heureux' (p. 103). The contrast established here between self-centredness and altruism is one which may be seen to define the two main characters in the novel, and it is with the former of these two characteristics that the narrator aligns himself. The universality of this 'nous' is thus undermined by the fact that the supposedly universal, human characteristic referred to is at odds with what are presented as the inherent and valued characteristics of the female sex.

It is precisely in this discourse surrounding the female character that the narrator's masculine perspective becomes most apparent. Thérèse is the independent, female artist, and thus occupies the only role the narrator of *Lettres à Marcie* presented as being open to women in the public sphere. He wrote:

Cherchez dans la hiérarchie sociale, dans tous les rangs du pouvoir ou de l'industrie, quelque position où la pensée de vous installer ne vous fasse pas sourire. Vous ne pouvez être qu'artiste, et cela, rien ne vous en empêchera.<sup>83</sup>

But this man then goes on to show how true fulfilment for Marcie is nonetheless to be found in the private and domestic sphere where she can realise her maternal vocation. This, he argues, is the source of woman's superiority, and as a result Marcie becomes

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<sup>83</sup> Sand, *Lettres à Marcie*, p. 183.

defined by her biological femininity. The same, I would suggest, is true for Thérèse in *Elle et Lui*. Although, like Laurent, she is an artist, unlike him it is not her artistic talent but rather her biological specificity, and in particular her propensity to mother, which for the narrator become the keys to understanding her behaviour. Thierry Bodin links the mother-child leitmotif in the text to aspects of the Sand-Musset correspondence, in which Sand writes to Musset: 'je t'ai aimé comme un fils, c'est un amour de mère'.<sup>84</sup> Given the myths which had grown up around the Sand-Musset relationship, it is not perhaps hard to understand why, in both this novel and in the highly-edited version of her correspondence with Musset which remains,<sup>85</sup> Sand should wish to emphasise the maternal aspect of this relationship over, for example, the passionate side. However, the maternal theme in the novel becomes linked to a rather different ideology, which emphasises the woman's role within the couple.

As the title indicates, the dominant narrative strand in *Elle et Lui* will be based around the heterosexual couple. Whereas for the male characters love will not be the only defining element of their existence, Thérèse will continually be defined through love and the couple, and her 'natural' destiny as a woman will be stressed. Such an organising ideology characterises the narrative as a romance plot, which Rachel Blau Duplessis defines as 'the use of conjugal love as a telos and of the developing heterosexual love relation as a major, if not the only major, element in organising the narrative action'.<sup>86</sup> This contrasts with the quest plot, of which Duplessis writes: 'a quest plot may be any progressive, goal oriented search with stages, obstacles and 'battles', which in general involves self-realisation, mastery and the expression of energy' (ibid.). For Duplessis, these plots apply differently to male and female

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<sup>84</sup> Sand, *Correspondance*, II (1966), 811.

<sup>85</sup> In a letter to Sainte-Beuve in 1861, Sand justifies her 'censorship' of passages of the correspondence which would have been detrimental either to third parties or to the memory of Musset. She writes: 'J'en voudrais retrancher tout ce qui est reproché d'elle à lui, bien que je désire que vous lisiez tout. J'ai fait, dans la partie que j'ai recopiée moi-même, les suppressions nécessaires et j'ai même coupé aux ciseaux, dans les autographes, tout ce qui pouvait blesser et compromettre des tiers' (*Correspondance*, XVI (1981), 248-49).

<sup>86</sup> Rachel Blau Duplessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 200, note 22.

characters, and she is specific about the gender ideology underlying the romance narrative:

As a narrative pattern, the romance plot muffles the main female character, represses quest, valorises heterosexual [. . .] ties, incorporates individuals within couples as a sign of their personal and narrative success. The romance plot separates love and quest, values sexual asymmetry, including the division of labour by gender, is based on extremes of sexual difference, and evokes an aura round the couple itself. (p. 5)

The romance plot is coded as patriarchal, for it values sexual difference as an important stabilising factor in society, preserves hierarchies of power and allows the female character social success only through the couple. It is precisely this perspective which will dominate the narrative of *Elle et Lui*. But on another level, *Elle et Lui* goes beyond this to interrogate the limitations of this system of representation and the male myths and desires which underpin it. This is achieved through a subtle and progressive undermining of the narrative discourse, as the limitations and underlying ideology of the perspective adopted by the narrator are exposed.

The sexual differentiation on which the romance plot is built is absent at the beginning of the novel, and whereas the title of the novel establishes a strict sexual opposition, the opening pages are characterised by sexual indifferentiation. Although Thérèse is an artist of some renown, as a woman her position is viewed as exceptional, and the narrator, elaborating on, or perhaps repeating Laurent's thoughts, describes her as 'cette anomalie, une femme jeune, belle, intelligente, absolument libre et volontairement isolée' (p. 51). This anomalous situation places her inscription in femininity in doubt, and Laurent in his first letter refers to her as 'un homme supérieur qui s'est déguisé en femme' (p. 41). Such bisexuality is also evident in her name (Thérèse Jacques), which, as Anne Callahan notes 'combines the masculine and the feminine'.<sup>87</sup> What seems to place Thérèse's femininity in doubt is not only the fact

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<sup>87</sup> Anne Callahan, 'Elle e(s)t Lui: L'Endroit et l'envers de l'autre romantique', in *George Sand: Collected Essays*, ed. by Janis Glasgow (New York: Whitsun, 1985), pp. 239-49 (p. 241).



that she is an artist, but also that she has neither a lover nor a husband. Laurent poses the question: 'Sait-on vraiment ce qu'elle croit, ce qu'elle ne croit pas, ce qu'elle veut, *ce qu'elle aime, et si seulement elle est capable d'aimer?*' (p. 46, my italics). Beyond the boundaries of what was deemed permissible for a woman, Laurent continues to see her as a man: 'vous devez avoir le cœur d'un homme puisque vous en avez la force et le talent' (p. 56). Artistic creativity is in Laurent's eyes a male domain to which Thérèse has access by virtue of her masculine side. This problematic sexual identity is relatively unimportant as long as their relationship is that of two artists, which is indeed the case in initial conversations between these two characters, since Thérèse tries to persuade Laurent to accept a commission to paint the portrait of Richard Palmer, one of her old acquaintances. However, the artistic nature of their discussions is soon displaced by Laurent's jealousy of Thérèse's friendship with Palmer, by his desire to know more about her, and by his love for her. As he no longer wishes their relationship to be that of two artists, her enclosure in femininity becomes important, and in the novel a link is thus established between the man's desires and Thérèse's construction as 'properly' feminine. The element of bisexuality often associated with artist figures is thus denied to Thérèse in the narrative.

Because of the mystery which surrounds Thérèse's identity, Laurent refers to her as 'un sphinx', but this element of mystery would disappear if she admitted to having a lover to whom she belongs (and Laurent is insistent on this latter point: 'il faut me dire que vous lui appartenez', p. 64). Once she does this, he is able to close the circle of signification around her, for she has become a woman: 'je sais qui vous êtes et qui je suis, et s'il faut tout dire, je crois que je vous aime mieux ainsi, *vous êtes une femme et non plus un sphinx*' (ibid., my italics). Sexual difference has been fixed through Thérèse's admission of dependence on a man, and in Laurent's eyes she becomes 'une femme pareille aux autres' (p. 65). But when the existence of Thérèse's mythical lover is denied by Palmer, the enigma returns and sexual difference is no longer guaranteed. She becomes, in a phrase which although integrated into the narrative seems to record Laurent's thoughts, 'cette fille sans parents, cette mère sans enfant, cette femme sans mari' (p. 74). Laurent once again sees her as the sphinx: 'Le

sphinx reparaissait devant les yeux éblouis de Laurent. Thérèse dévoilée lui paraissait plus mystérieuse que jamais' (ibid.). However, when Laurent finds out the truth about Thérèse's past life from Palmer, he writes to her immediately and declares his love, but insists at the same time that, 'auprès de vous je suis chaste comme un petit enfant' (p. 75), and finally says: 'c'est vous que j'aime avec passion et non pas moi-même' (ibid.). It is the passionate nature of this letter which upsets Thérèse, but when Laurent writes a second note which places the maternal signifier firmly in centre stage, the appeal to her maternal nature finally permits her love. Her reaction to this letter is described by the narrator as a violent one:

Ces deux lignes firent trembler Thérèse de la tête aux pieds. La seule passion qu'elle n'eût jamais travaillé à éteindre dans son cœur, *c'était l'amour maternel*. Cette plaie-là, bien que fermée en apparence, était toujours saignante comme *l'amour inassouvi*. «Comme un enfant!» répétait-elle en serrant la lettre dans *ses mains agitées de je ne sais quel frisson*. (p. 79, my italics)

Maternal love is presented as Thérèse's weak spot, the point of her personality where she is most susceptible, and is also described as an unfulfilled love that needs satisfaction. Whereas the idea that, because her marriage with the Comte de \*\*\* ended disastrously, she should therefore feel some as yet unfulfilled desire to find another man is never evoked, the narrator depicts her as having a natural maternal love which must find an object.

Corresponding to Laurent's gradual fixing of Thérèse as feminine, there is a noticeable increase in interventions by the narrator, which relate primarily to the heroine's feminine side, and in particular to her maternal devotion. It is perhaps not coincidental that this narrative discourse only becomes pronounced and confident once Thérèse can be fitted into conventional categories of womanhood, and therefore once the conditions for the romance plot are fulfilled. In this context, one of the narrator's first lengthy comments on Thérèse's character is revealing in its formulation:

Artiste enthousiaste sous son air calme et réfléchi, elle avait voué une sorte de culte, disait-elle, à ce qu'il [Laurent] eût pu être, et il lui en restait une pitié pleine de gâteries, où se mêlait encore un vrai respect pour le génie souffrant et fourvoyé. Si elle eût été bien certaine de ne pouvoir éveiller en lui aucun mauvais désir, elle l'eût caressé comme un fils, et il y avait des moments où elle se reprenait parce qu'il lui venait sur les lèvres de le tutoyer.

Y avait-il de l'amour dans ce sentiment maternel? Il y en avait certainement à l'insu de Thérèse; mais une femme vraiment chaste, et qui a vécu plus longtemps de travail que de passion, peut garder longtemps vis-à-vis d'elle-même le secret d'un amour dont elle a résolu de se défendre. (p. 66)

Although the narrator's description of Thérèse begins by affirming her artistic temperament, this is soon displaced by his emphasis on her feminine side. It is as if this provides the real key to understanding her as a character. Indeed, when the narrator later characterises the life of an artist, it is not a description which could readily be applied to Thérèse:

Les artistes, en raison de leur vie indépendante et de leurs occupations, qui les obligent souvent d'abandonner le convenu social, sont plus exposés à ces dangers que ceux qui vivent dans le réglé et dans le positif. On doit donc leur pardonner des entraînements plus soudains et des impressions plus fiévreuses. [. . .] Et puis le monde exige des artistes le feu de l'inspiration, et il faut bien que ce feu qui déborde pour les plaisirs et les enthousiasmes du public arrive à les consumer eux-mêmes. (p. 83)

Whilst this provides an adequate framework for understanding Laurent's behaviour, it seems on the other hand to exclude Thérèse. The sign under which she is seen to exist is that of the mother. Already in the correspondence at the beginning of the novel she exhibits a concern for Laurent's well-being that is typically that of the mother for the child, and whilst asking him to 'be good', she also exhorts him not to go to bed late: 'Moi, je ne suis qu'une vieille prêcheuse qui vous aime bien, qui vous conjure de ne pas vous coucher tard toutes les nuits' (p. 42). Thérèse however denies that she is a mother to Laurent: 'Je n'ai pas le bonheur [. . .] ou le malheur d'être votre mère; mais je suis votre sœur' (p. 52). But as Laurent calls on her pity and understanding, he casts himself in the role of a child and Thérèse is increasingly defined by her maternal devotion. I am not suggesting that the narrator is wrong to highlight this side to Thérèse's character, and there is clear evidence in the text to

support his comments. But I would suggest that his understanding of this character is both limited and undermined by his almost exclusive focus on this aspect of her personality, for there is more to this relationship than that of a mother and a son, and there are passages in the novel which point to an ambiguity in Thérèse's feelings for Laurent. We are told, for instance, that when she received friends they noticed 'une certaine préoccupation, *un désir involontaire et mal déguisé* de causer exclusivement avec M. de Fauvel [Laurent]' (p. 79, my italics). Also, when he does not visit at his usual time, but instead sends a letter, the narrator notes that 'Thérèse regretta involontairement que ce ne fût pas lui-même' (ibid.). It is strongly hinted that there is more than maternal devotion at work here. The narrator's emphasis on this element of Thérèse's character thus obscures another side to her concern for him which is not so much that of mother for son, but of artist for artist. If Thérèse and Laurent's initial letters can be read as expressing maternal and passionate love respectively, on another level this is also a correspondence between artists. As the novel develops there is a progression towards a love narrative, but the emphasis at the beginning is clearly on art. In her first letter to him, Thérèse writes principally out of concern and admiration for Laurent's artistic genius, which she wants him to preserve at all costs: 'A quoi songez-vous [. . .] de détruire ainsi, de gaieté de cœur, une existence si précieuse et si belle!' (p. 42). Her central consideration in this letter is to force him to work by accepting to paint Palmer's portrait. The first conversation between them which is recorded in the novel is equally artistic in nature, and in it Thérèse stresses that love is 'en dehors de mon sujet; c'est à l'artiste que je parle' (p. 53).

It is, however, by according little significance to Thérèse's artistic creation that the narrator is able to situate her exclusively in a maternal vocation. In addition, although Thérèse has become known as a painter of portraits and enjoys 'une réputation de premier ordre' (p. 51), this is a type of art that is devalued in the novel. Laurent, for instance, comments: 'Certains peintres, incapables de rien composer, peuvent copier fidèlement et agréablement le modèle vivant' (p. 40). Moreover, Thérèse's artistic talent soon becomes linked in the novel to her maternal concern, since as an artist her energies are devoted not to her own art, but to Laurent's, an action which can easily

be accommodated to her femininity. During their relationship it is Thérèse's art which suffers, and when, after the disastrous evening spent together in the forest, Laurent begins again to paint 'avec ardeur' (p. 93), her work is interrupted by her devotion to him, for she sacrifices to him 'ce précieux temps qui est tout le capital de l'artiste' (p. 94). It is a process which will continue during their trip to Italy, when Laurent's behaviour will place her (financial) need to paint in jeopardy. Not only is Thérèse's artistic devotion to Laurent exploited, but for the narrator it becomes an expression not of an artistic temperament, but of a feminine and maternal nature.

It is shortly after their arrival in Italy that the arguments and tensions between the two lovers lead to the break-up of their relationship. However, when Laurent falls ill shortly afterwards, Thérèse rushes to his bedside, and this episode in the novel again seems to serve as proof of her natural female devotion. She indeed refers to the 'soins maternels' (p. 114) which she has given him during his illness, and calls him 'mon enfant' (p. 113). But Thérèse here redefines her maternal love, and detaches herself from Laurent. Although she admits to him that 'ma tendresse de sœur et de mère te restera malgré tout' (p. 115), she also asserts her independence, describing herself as 'maîtresse de moi-même' (p. 114) and says, 'J'ai repris ma personne et ma volonté' (p. 115). Whilst on the one hand Thérèse's refusal to submit herself again to Laurent's desires is undoubtedly contingent on her engagement to Palmer, there is also a sense in which it may be seen as part of her own development. It also crucially precedes the period in the novel which Thérèse spends alone in Porto-Venere, and to which the narrator accords little significance in his presentation of Thérèse's character. This downplaying of Thérèse's development as an individual has wider implications, to which I will return later, but in the context of her relationship with Laurent, it allows the narrator to present the renewal of this relationship as taking place on the same basis as before. Despite having assured readers that 'la chaîne fatale ne pouvait pas être renouvelée' (p. 119), and despite Thérèse's own assertion that '[elle] aimerai[t] mieux mourir que d'avoir de l'amour pour lui' (p. 143), the narrator now presents their renewed relationship as a natural, even predictable occurrence, the inevitable consequence of Thérèse's well-documented maternal nature:



Thérèse sentit bientôt que l'affection de son *pauvre enfant*, comme il s'intitulait toujours, lui était douce, et que, si elle pouvait continuer ainsi, elle serait le plus pur et le meilleur sentiment de sa vie.

Elle l'encouragea par des réponses toutes maternelles à persévérer dans la voie de travail où il se disait rentré pour toujours. (pp. 158-59, italics in original)

Other factors do, however, come into play, for Laurent also seems to have reformed his character. He at least initially appears to have tamed his passion, and the narrator tells us that: 'Laurent semblait être régénéré au point d'avoir réintégré l'amour moral à la place qu'il doit occuper en première ligne' (p. 163). He has also begun to work again, and is therefore able to raise himself in Thérèse's estimation. That said, the narrator's reasoning can still essentially be reduced to one argument: Thérèse is a natural mother, Laurent a natural child and so they are again destined to be bound together by this 'fatale chaîne' (p. 162). In fact, in one of the only acknowledgements by the narrator of an evolution on Thérèse's part, he asserts that from a false belief that she could find fulfilment in art, Thérèse has now acknowledged her true nature:

Elle s'était longtemps imaginé [. . .] que l'art serait son unique passion. Elle s'était trompée, et elle ne pouvait plus se faire d'illusions sur l'avenir. Il lui fallait aimer, et son plus grand malheur, c'est qu'il lui fallait aimer avec douceur, avec abnégation, et satisfaire à tout prix cet élan maternel qui était comme une fatalité de sa nature et de sa vie. (p. 162).

Nevertheless, the link which art provides between these two characters is still strong, especially as Laurent is now enjoying a period of renewed artistic creativity and success. It is perhaps not insignificant that after Thérèse's absence from Paris, their first meeting takes place in his studio, when he invites her to give an opinion on a painting he has just finished. But for the narrator art again becomes subsumed under maternal devotion:

Dans cette pitié de Thérèse [. . .] il y avait un respect enthousiaste et peut-être un peu fanatique pour le génie de l'artiste. Cette femme qu'il accusait d'être bourgeoise et inintelligente quand il la voyait travailler à son bien-être à lui avec candeur et persévérance, elle était grandement artiste, *au moins dans son amour*, puisqu'elle acceptait la tyrannie de Laurent comme étant de droit divin, et lui sacrifiait sa propre fierté, son



propre travail, et ce qu'une autre moins dévouée eût peut-être appelé sa propre gloire. (p. 167, my italics)

For the narrator, Thérèse's artistic greatness becomes linked to, and indeed expressed through her love for Laurent, and thus devalued. It is, however, art which provides the only moments of stability in an increasingly turbulent relationship: 'quand leurs cœurs se taisaient, leurs intelligences se convenaient et s'entendaient encore' (p. 171). It is in these moments, when Thérèse and Laurent return to some extent to the sexual indifferentiation of the beginning of the novel, when they converse as artists rather than lovers, that they enjoy the greatest calm in their relationship. In these moments Laurent is significantly not trying to construct Thérèse into an impossible femininity based on his contradictory desires, for as we have seen, he wants Thérèse's devotion but also wishes to retain his independence, he wants her to be both a muse and mother to him, but at the same time rejects her bourgeois stability and lack of passion. In a letter to her mother written in Porto-Venere, Thérèse reflects on the ideal woman Laurent appears to desire: 'cet enfant voudrait avoir pour maîtresse quelque chose comme la Vénus de Milo, animée du souffle de ma patronne sainte Thérèse, ou plutôt il faudrait que la même femme fût aujourd'hui Sapho et demain Jeanne d'Arc' (p. 128). It is precisely these contradictory desires which underlie the impossible nature of their relationship, and which seem to move towards a narrative telos in death when Laurent would kill the woman who cannot be all that he wants her to be. In *Elle et Lui* the imagery of death is indeed strongly marked at the end, and Thérèse at one point wakes to see Laurent holding a knife. But such an ending is subverted when Thérèse extricates herself from this relationship and fashions a future based on her own wishes and desires. This becomes possible with the *deus-ex-machina*-like return of Thérèse's son, whom she had thought to be dead, and with whom she flees to Germany to begin a new life.

This denouement can on one level be read as following the narrative logic of 'maternal devotion', and it is from this perspective that the narrator comments on the ending: 'Elle était mère, et la mère avait irrévocablement tué l'amante' (p. 179). Certainly Thérèse follows through on a maternal vocation that the narrative discourse

has closed her in, but she has also combined it with a desire for independence and artistic creation. She has refused the male system of exchange and its enshrinement of female submission. In one sense Thérèse's actions at the end of the novel are again a response to male desires, in this case those of her son, who says to her: 'Il faut me prendre avec vous et me garder si vous voulez de moi' (p. 178). But in *Elle et Lui* we nonetheless have a breaking of the patriarchal plot, through an ending which leaves male desires unfulfilled and the female protagonist in an equally anomalous position to the one she occupied at the beginning of the novel, that is both independent and happy. Paradoxically, re-establishing her bonds with her child allows Thérèse to escape patriarchal formulations of a woman's duty.

It is clear from the novel that Laurent's actions reveal the hidden agenda of female submission that underlies patriarchal discourse on women's maternal instinct, for he continually lays claim to her sacrifice and devotion, and his desires remain at all times predominant. As Elisabeth Badinter comments:

Décidément, les hommes furent de meilleurs défenseurs de la cause des mères, à moins que par ce biais ils n'aient plaidé en réalité pour eux-mêmes.<sup>88</sup>

It is instead a concept of maternal, altruistic devotion as a source of change, the foundation of a different social economy not patriarchal in origin, that is hinted at in the ending of *Elle et Lui*. Thérèse's move away from a relationship which was not just stifling her creativity, and indeed her subjectivity, but which was also killing her, becomes a move out of a patriarchal space connoted as negative. The depths of Germany become to some extent Thérèse's version of Indiana's Bernica, a space isolated from the men who would control, define and exploit her.

Whilst Thérèse's choice of the child over the lover subverts both typical romantic closure and the patriarchal role of the mother, dependent on the father, it must be stressed that at the end Thérèse is more than just a mother. She is also an artist, and

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<sup>88</sup> Elisabeth Badinter, *L'Amour en plus* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), p. 188.

art is to be a part of the new life she is to create with her child: 'Thérèse alla cacher son enfant, son bonheur, son repos, *son travail*, sa joie, sa vie, au fond de l'Allemagne' (p. 179, my italics). As merely one element in a list, no particular significance is attached to Thérèse's work in this passage. And yet given that her relationship with Laurent had involved a sacrifice of artistic creation, this return to art must be seen as a factor of some significance. Her inscription in the world of art is confirmed by the final letter in which Thérèse speaks to Laurent as an artist, showing concern for his genius and giving him advice. These are the words on which the novel closes, and they show a Thérèse who has found a means of satisfying both her emotional and artistic needs, outside the patriarchal logic which offered her either love or art, and which had emphasised her 'natural' need to mother rather than to create.

What makes this ending so unexpected, and indeed subversive, is the fact that it does not correspond to any of the conventional resolutions of the romance narrative which has structured the novel, that is either marriage or death for the central female character. In this sense, the ending may be seen to draw on elements of the quest, for Thérèse's resolution of her own narrative is one which does not enclose her in the heterosexual couple. Quest is seen by Duplessis as a male privilege in the nineteenth-century novel, in that it emphasises activity, independence and subjectivity, and is generally denied to the female character. Where quest and love plots co-exist, Duplessis argues that in the resolution of the narrative one of the two plot strands is repressed, and that in women's case it is generally the quest plot which becomes subordinate to the romance. In *Elle et Lui* the narrator's perspective, dominated by the gender ideology of the romance, reveals an attempt to link the ending of the novel to such an ideology by emphasising the maternal element of Thérèse's actions. By so doing, he also ensures the sexual difference affirmed by the romance narrative. However, this is an ending which is dependent on an element of development on Thérèse's part which is suppressed in the narrator's telling of the story. Although the idea of self-development on Thérèse's part is diminished by the fact that at the end of the novel she is in a position not dissimilar to that of the beginning (this circular structure perhaps reinforced by the Thérèse-Laurent correspondence that both opens

and closes the novel), we can nevertheless assert that at the end Thérèse acts according to her own inclinations, and that her realisation of what she wants has been dependent on, and a consequence of, the experiences recounted in the novel. But this idea of Thérèse's personal development, linked to a quest narrative, is consistently downplayed by a narrator whose principal concern is to situate the heroine firmly in the romance. This is particularly true of the time Thérèse spends in Porto-Venere, when a period of independence and creation on Thérèse's part is portrayed by the narrator as leading principally to the renewal of her engagement to Palmer, and hence to her enclosure once again in the couple.

This episode of the novel has received little attention from those few critics who have worked on *Elle et Lui*, a fact which may perhaps be linked to the lack of autobiographical material corresponding to Thérèse's stay in Porto-Venere. It is a period which can, I think, be considered as forming part of the quest plot of the novel since it seems to be the locus of intersection of a number of unfulfilled desires on Thérèse's part: the desire for independence as an artist, for a man who will live up to her expectations in love, and for a stable, 'bourgeois' life. Away from society, detached from the two men who would possess her, Thérèse has broken the telos of the romance plot and extracted herself from the controlling narrative doxa. She is again able to speak, to express herself, and if her final words in these two chapters restart the plot telos more or less from where it left off ('Elle tendit les deux mains à Palmer et lui dit: «Ah ça, où et quand nous marions-nous?»', p. 146), this has nonetheless been an important interval for Thérèse in which she has to some extent reclaimed her subjectivity and through two important letters to her mother given voice to some of her desires.

There is significantly much in this episode of the novel that escapes narrative control. This is indicated by specific interventions such as 'je ne sais quelle tristesse s'était emparée d'elle' (p. 141), and more generally by a relative lack of interventions by the narrator in a section largely composed of dialogue and letters (thus recalling the beginning of the novel, when Thérèse's behaviour also appeared anomalous). Yet

afterwards, the plot seems to pick up from where it left off before Thérèse's retreat to Porto-Venere, almost as if nothing had happened. Thérèse is to marry Palmer and her feelings for Laurent seem to go no deeper than a certain residue of 'natural' female devotion and affection for him. If this period can be explained as an example of the typical romantic obstacle to love which must be overcome, thus proving the love of the two characters, it is important to note that the obstacle in this case comes from within Thérèse (her annoyance at Palmer's lack of trust; her difficulty in detaching herself from Laurent) rather than from the outside. For these obstacles to be overcome there must be some development in Thérèse's character, or at least an important period of introspection that puts Thérèse in touch with her own wishes and desires. It is this side to the Porto-Venere 'interlude' that is played down by the narrator. His discourse in the remainder of the novel seems to treat Thérèse as unchanged by it.

This perspective again emerges in the ending of the novel, for the narrator gives no indication of development on Thérèse's part, instead describing her actions as an expression of an already well-pronounced maternal devotion. There is however a sense in which the ending of the novel should be read as a quest resolution. Thérèse has rejected the two possible partners offered to her in the novel and has carved for herself a space at once within the maternal sphere, but at the same time rejecting the father figure and hence the patriarchal side to this relationship. It is an ending which removes her from a constricting relationship and creates the possibility for self-development on her part. In this sense it also crucially links back to the period in Porto-Venere when similar independence and creativity could not be reconciled to the romance plot by the narrator until Thérèse reinserted herself into a relationship with Palmer. As the heroine's actions at the end of the novel again exceed the romance plot, so the patriarchal ideology of the narrator is exposed. In this context, the emphasis on the maternal becomes not so much a reflection of autobiographical material, but an exposition of the male myths and desires which underlie one of the dominant scripts of literature. Like *Lettres à Marcie, Elle et Lui* therefore exposes and, through its ending, to some extent undermines, a central tenet of patriarchal



thought whereby women become defined exclusively through their biological specificity.

(v) *Conclusion*

Gérard Genette writes in *Nouveau discours du récit* that 'le récit consiste moins en un discours qu'en des discours, deux ou plusieurs'.<sup>89</sup> This is certainly true of the novels I have considered in this section, though it is perhaps more accurate to say that whilst Sand's third- and first-person narratives contain a plurality of voices and different discourses, one of these is dominant, and this is invariably the voice of the male narrator. It is, of course, this imposition of coherence through the domination of one moralising voice which has led to much of Sand's fiction being classed as didactic, and hence considered unreadable today. However, this charge of 'unreadability' can be countered when one realises that the male's claims to authority are subverted, that there are cracks in his apparently coherent system, and that a signifying gap is thus opened up between narrator and implied author.

As a first stage in this process, Sand deprives the third-person, omniscient narrator of the neutrality to which he lays claim, for such narratives are invariably grounded in a male perspective, and, as I have shown, this even applies to semi-autobiographical novels such as *Elle et Lui*. In Sand's fiction there are no third-person female narrators, and in many of her novels the narrative voice is explicitly gendered (as in *Indiana* or first-person narratives such as *Horace*). Where this is not the case, the neutrality of the narrative perspective is undermined as chinks appear in the narrator's presentation of events. A further example of this can be found in *Jeanne* when the narrator comments on Marsillat's violent attempts at seducing Jeanne and his imprisonment of her in his room. He writes:

Il [Marsillat] sortit précipitamment et enferma Jeanne, qui commença à trembler sérieusement quand elle se fut assurée que la porte avait reçu à l'extérieur un tour de clef. Cependant elle ne pouvait se persuader que

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<sup>89</sup> Gérard Genette, *Nouveau discours du récit* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1983), p. 9.



Marsillat fût capable d'un *crime*, et elle se disait qu'aucune offre, aucune promesse n'aurait d'effet sur elle. Marsillat n'avait pas, en effet, la pensée de commettre un *crime*. [. . .] S'étant toujours adressé à des villageoises coquettes ou faibles, il n'avait pas trouvé de cruelles; et, comme il affectait un profond mépris pour la vertu des femmes, il ne voulait point se persuader qu'aucune pût lui résister. [. . .] «Il faudra plus de temps et de paroles pour celle-là que pour les autres, se disait-il [. . .]. Enfermée quatre ou cinq heures avec moi, à force d'obsessions, j'enflammerai cette froide Galatée, et au moins qu'elle ne soit de marbre, j'en triompherai sans lutte et sans bruit.<sup>90</sup>

The narrator's use of the word 'crime' here is revealing. Whilst readers may consider Marsillat's kidnapping and imprisonment of Jeanne already to be criminal, the narrator's commentary suggests that for both him and Marsillat it is only rape which would constitute a crime (and this viewpoint is also attributed by the narrator to Jeanne when he records her thoughts). Both men seem to share a patriarchal code of behaviour, and whilst the blameworthy nature of Marsillat's actions is evident, these are not explicitly condemned by the narrator.

This adoption of both a male voice and a masculine, patriarchal perspective may be read as emphasising the oppression that women face and exposing the realities of the society in which they exist (here, for instance, that under the laws of this society, Marsillat's actions probably do not constitute a crime). By concentrating in this way on women's oppression, such narratives, Scott Simpkins argues, exert 'a potentially greater effect upon the reader who recognizes this inequality'.<sup>91</sup> One could not, I think, deny that Sand's novels expose the negativity of patriarchal structures, which in both society and literature are built on the oppression of the female. It is precisely this subordination of the feminine which is at the heart of Sand's male-voiced narratives.

In an interesting episode of *Mademoiselle Merquem*, the eponymous heroine remembers what she was told about her position as a woman in society:

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<sup>90</sup> George Sand, *Jeanne* (Grenoble: Éditions Glénat, 1993), p. 242, my italics.

<sup>91</sup> Scott Simpkins, 'They Do the Men in Different Voices: Narrative Cross Dressing in Sand and Shelley', *Style*, 26 (1992), 400-18 (p. 408).

La femme n'est rien, une jeune fille sage n'a pas d'idées préconçues. Elle se tient prête à subir le degré de capacité de son futur maître, et, en attendant, elle se conserve à l'état de table rase. Son âme est un sable léger sur lequel elle fera bien de passer le râteau tous les matins, afin que son futur époux n'y trouve pas la plus légère trace et y écrive tout ce qui lui plaira, si toutefois il sait écrire quelque chose.<sup>92</sup>

Formulated this way, the idea of woman as blank on which men as their masters inscribe their wishes and desires serves perfectly as a metaphor of the position of women in literature. As the 'other' onto whom men project their desires (a process masterfully exposed in *Horace*), women are consigned in literature to the position of object, and their words are repressed by the dominant male voice. This is a structure which is maintained in Sand's male-voiced novels, but here the repressed discourse breaks through to challenge the authority of the male, and the workings of the system of literary representation are thus exposed. The repressed feminine points to another space in the text, to another story within the male narrative which can only be read in the cracks of this narrative. These novels not only contain a critique of the treatment of women in society, they also allow for readings which reveal the workings of the patriarchal, philosophical, literary and theoretical systems.

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<sup>92</sup> George Sand, *Mademoiselle Merquem* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1868), p. 196.

## Part Two

### Multiple Voices: Sand's Epistolary and 'Fragmented' Novels

Whilst it is true that the majority of Sand's novels are narrated by a single, apparently authoritative (male) voice, there is nevertheless in her *œuvre* a number of texts composed of a multiplicity of voices and hence of narrative perspectives. The novels I am referring to here include both the epistolary novels with multiple correspondents - that is *Jacques* (1834), *Mademoiselle la Quintinie* (1863) and *Monsieur Sylvestre* (1865) - and those novels whose narrative form can best be described as 'fragmented', since they are composed of a mixture of letters, extracts from private journals, confessional monologues, dialogues and passages of third-person narrative. Under this heading I include *Lélia* (first published in 1833, though extensively rewritten and republished in 1839), *Isidora* (1846) and *La Filleule* (1853). These two distinct groups of novels, one looking back to an eighteenth-century tradition, the other forward to the experimental and elliptical nature of the modern novel, attest to Sand's varied use of the multi-voiced form. Given that in Sand's third-person narratives, the narrators' attempts at monologic authority appear to entail the repression of the (feminine) other, one is led, when looking at these multi-voiced novels, to consider what is changed when this single, dominant voice is replaced by a plurality of voices. Might one be justified in arguing that there are aspects within these novels which are incompatible with a narrative form controlled by an authoritative, patriarchal narrator?

Although in his study of Bakhtin, Michael Holquist warns against the simple equation of 'multiple point of view' with polyphony,<sup>1</sup> this concept nonetheless provides a useful background for considering the narrative strategies of these multi-voiced texts, especially insofar as they may be viewed as countering the power and authority of the monologic narrative. The term polyphony originates in Bakhtin's study of the dynamics of power between author and characters in Dostoevsky's novels, of which he writes:

*A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event.*<sup>2</sup>

Polyphony thus describes a relation between an author and his characters in which the latter are permitted to have what Holquist describes as 'the status of an "I" standing over against the claims of [the] authorial other'.<sup>3</sup> Although most novels are polyphonic in the literal sense of containing a number of voices, not all give free play to these voices and discourses, not all free their characters from the status of representatives of an authorial vision. Two aspects of the polyphonic or dialogic novel set it apart from the monologic text: it is based on different relations to the other and does not attempt to repress voices of difference. The two are in fact linked, for if the drive towards authority and power leads to repression of the other, the dialogic text, built on exchange and interaction, does not annihilate or assimilate voices of difference, but instead allows the 'other' life. It is the resulting plurality of the narrative which has most interested feminist critics, for, as Friederike Eigler asserts, 'it is the inclusion of disruptive and dissenting voices that results in the critical

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his world* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 6 (italics in original).

<sup>3</sup> Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his world*, p. 34 (italics in original).

potential of the multi-voiced narrative'.<sup>4</sup> The diversity of antagonistic voices within a polyphonic novel means that no one discourse or perspective is seen as holding the truth, and the authoritarian discourse of patriarchy can both be resisted and undercut. It is by focusing on such marginalised voices in Sand's apparently monologic novels that their subversion of patriarchal authority can be brought to light. This chapter will consider the extent to which Sand's more obviously multi-voiced narratives participate in, or extend, this dialogic challenge to monologic authority.

(i) '*Jacques*', '*Mademoiselle la Quintinie*' and '*Monsieur Sylvestre*': A Multi-Voiced Monologism?

In *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form*, Janet Altman argues that the epistolary novel, because of its experimentation with 'elliptical narration, subjectivity and multiplicity of points of view' stands in a 'diametrical relationship to the dominant traits of nineteenth-century narrative (with its third-person omniscient narrator, objective presentation, attention to the role of physical setting and environment, concern with historical and social surroundings)'.<sup>5</sup> It is certainly true that by the middle of the nineteenth century the Golden Age of the epistolary novel had passed. Laurent Versini lists some 300 epistolary novels published in France between 1700 and 1800 (although he admits that this list is not exhaustive),<sup>6</sup> and N. Würzbach estimates that in the eighteenth century, about one fifth of fiction was in epistolary form.<sup>7</sup> By 1841, however, Balzac viewed the epistolary novel as a marginal form, and in the preface to the first edition of *Mémoires de deux jeunes mariées*, an epistolary novel which he dedicated to George Sand, he noted that the publication of a correspondence was 'chose assez inusitée depuis bientôt quarante ans'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Friederike Eigler, 'Feminist Criticism and Bakhtin's Dialogic Principle', *Women in German Yearbook*, 11 (1995), 189-203 (p. 197).

<sup>5</sup> Janet Gurkin Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), p. 195.

<sup>6</sup> Laurent Versini, *Laclos et la tradition* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1968), pp. 650-64.

<sup>7</sup> Natascha Würzbach, *The Novel in Letters* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. ix.

<sup>8</sup> Honoré de Balzac, *Mémoires de deux jeunes mariées* in *Œuvres complètes*, 2 vols (Paris: Pléiade, 1976), I, 193.

In examining the close link between the epistolary novel and the eighteenth century, critics have focused variously on the form as a reflection of the social mores (Versini), or the intellectual climate of the period (MacArthur). The latter argues that the epistolary form in literature was particularly suited to the investigative spirit of the Enlightenment because of its 'multiple perspectives and internal commentary, putting into question the possibility of objective truth or stable authority'.<sup>9</sup> Although Sand's epistolary novels may be seen as continuing this tradition of philosophical and moral debate, since in each there is an ostensible challenging of authority or social institutions, this is not achieved through the presence of multiple voices, but rather through the voice of one character who appears to enjoy the status of correct interpreter of events and to function as the spokesman for the implied author. This leads to what is, I think, the crucial point about Sand's epistolary novels: despite their multi-voiced form, they are constructed around a monologic unity rather than polyphonic plurality, and are organised in such a way as to restrict rather than exploit the dialogic potential of their form.

Of the three novels under consideration, *Jacques* is composed of the most complex interplay of voices since there are six principal correspondents (Jacques, Sylvia, Fernande, Octave, Clémence and Herbert, with the latter two functioning as confidants for Fernande and Octave respectively), and seven different correspondences (Jacques-Sylvia, Jacques-Fernande, Jacques-Octave, Sylvia-Octave, Octave-Fernande, Octave-Herbert, Fernande-Clémence). This multiplicity of voices is exploited most effectively at the beginning of the novel when Jacques's character is presented from a number of different perspectives. The impression is given of a rather enigmatic character whom nobody can ever really know properly: Fernande describes him as being 'l'homme le plus noble de la terre',<sup>10</sup> but as having 'l'expression d'une âme orgueilleuse et sensible, d'une destinée rude, mais vaincue' (p. 817); Clémence

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<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth MacArthur, *Extravagant Narratives: Closure and Dynamics in the Epistolary Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> George Sand, *Jacques*, in *Romans 1830* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1991), p. 815. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.



first suggests that he appears from Fernande's descriptions to be 'vieux et froid' (p. 822), and then later wonders whether he might not be characterised by 'beaucoup de dépravation et beaucoup d'orgueil' (p. 842); Sylvia underlines the fact that Jacques is not 'fait pour vivre avec les hommes tels qu'ils sont' (p. 821); and Borel echoes this sentiment when he recalls Capitaine Jean's opinion that 'Jacques n'appartient pas tout à fait à l'espèce humaine; il y a dans son corps et dans son esprit une trempe d'acier dont le secret est perdu sans doute' (p. 831). The different opinions expressed in these opening pages have the effect not only of affirming Jacques as the central character in the novel, but also of emphasising his extraordinary, even superior, nature.

Recent critical analyses of *Jacques* have tended to accept unproblematically this view of the principal character as superior and infallible, and have underscored the monologic aspects of the text by concentrating on Jacques's voice to the exclusion of those of other characters.<sup>11</sup> Although Regina Bochenek-Frankzakowa, for example, acknowledges Jacques's weaknesses and contradictions (he is not always aware of what is going on and sometimes overestimates his own abilities), these do not, in her view, detract to a significant extent from his veritable superiority, and she refers to Jacques's 'traits exceptionnels'.<sup>12</sup> Robert Godwin-Jones is explicit in his linking of author and principal character and, after quoting Jacques's views on marriage, he writes: 'This is the lesson Sand hoped to impart through her novels of the early 1830s, the need for marriage to be radically redefined'.<sup>13</sup> He adds later:

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<sup>11</sup> Two papers presented at the most recent George Sand conference ('George Sand. History Politics and Society: From the First Empire to the Third Republic') held at Hofstra University in November 1996 indicate a change in this trend. Both Jacinta Wright in 'Une Mauvaise copie de Monsieur de Wolmar: Sand's subversion of Rousseau's masculinities' and Anne McCall in 'Falling through the Cracks: *Jacques* and the reproduction of Utopia' present more nuanced and critical views of Sand's eponymous hero. Wright argues that in *Jacques*, Fernande's choice of Octave over Jacques subverts traditional hierarchies of masculinity.

<sup>12</sup> Regina Bochenek-Frankzakowa, 'George Sand et le roman par lettres: le cas de *Jacques*', in *Le Chantier de George Sand, George Sand et l'étranger: Actes du X<sup>e</sup> colloque international George Sand*, ed. by Tivadar Gorilovics and Anna Szabó (Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, 1993), pp. 29-34 (p. 30).

<sup>13</sup> Godwin-Jones, *Romantic Vision*, p. 59.

Jacques stands as an exemplary model, someone far enough ahead of his time to be able to anticipate the kind of union of men and women which will develop in the future. [. . .] The reader is meant to admire Jacques's conduct. (p. 60)

Mireille Bossis describes Jacques as 'un homme d'une qualité morale exceptionnelle'<sup>14</sup> and Janis Glasgow describes him simply as 'admirable'.<sup>15</sup> Only Kristina Wingård Vareille highlights Jacques's failings and contradictions, for she takes into account not only what he says, but also how he relates to those around him. She argues that his rejection of masculine values in society leads him to idolise the feminine principle (*woman* as an abstract concept) but as a result, and this is his principal failing, he is unable to relate to real *women* as social and emotional beings. She therefore considers Jacques as a superior being who is the victim of the historical and social circumstances in which he is forced to exist.<sup>16</sup>

There is little doubt that within the text Jacques is portrayed as superior, for this is the characteristic which links the various opinions of him voiced in the opening pages of the novel. It is an idea which is perpetuated principally by Sylvia, occasionally by Jacques himself, and even by Fernande and Octave. Jacques considers himself to be outside and above society, and in his first letter he writes:

Les améliorations que rêvent quelques esprits généreux sont impossibles à réaliser dans ce siècle-ci; ces esprits-là oublient qu'ils sont de cent ans en avant de leurs contemporains. (p. 834)

Since this comes after his critique of the institution of marriage, it seems clear that he counts himself amongst these superior minds. Many of Sylvia's letters to him insist on this idea of his exceptional nature: she describes him as not being 'soumis aux misères communes' (p. 840) and agrees that he is right not to compromise his principles for 'cette boue humaine' (ibid.) from which he is clearly to be differentiated.

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<sup>14</sup> Mireille Bossis, 'L'Homme Dieu ou l'idole brisée dans les romans de George Sand', in *George Sand: Colloque de Cérisy*, ed. by Simone Vierre (Paris: CDU/SEDES, 1983), pp. 179-87 (p. 181).

<sup>15</sup> Janis Glasgow, 'The Use of Doubles in George Sand's *Jacques*' in *The George Sand Papers: Conference Proceedings 1978*, ed. by Nathalie Datlof and others (New York: AMS Press, 1982), pp. 32-48 (p. 35).

<sup>16</sup> Vareille, *Socialité, sexualité et les impasses de l'histoire*, pp. 272-301.

Octave's view of Jacques is often coloured by the state of his relationship with Fernande, but when he realises that Jacques does not intend to interfere with their happiness, he writes to Fernande that Jacques is 'un homme trop supérieur pour se laisser affecter des insultes de la sottise' and describes him as 'un homme excellent' (p. 1015). Fernande in her reply to this letter agrees with Octave: 'c'est un homme excellent: il est impossible d'avoir plus de générosité, de douceur, de délicatesse et de raison' (ibid.). Whilst the positive appreciations Octave and Fernande give of Jacques's character are conditioned by the egoistical happiness his conduct affords them, they nonetheless add to the almost complete unanimity of voices extolling Jacques's superiority at the end of the novel. Fernande's continued veneration for her husband, for example, is stressed when, in the last of her letters to be included in the novel, she admits her admiration for her husband's qualities, specifically his lack of jealousy, and for the freedom he allows her. Indeed Fernande even refers positively to an earlier letter from Jacques in which he had offered to be a father to her should she no longer wish to have him as a husband:

Il savait bien ce qu'il disait alors: «Quand tu ne me permettras plus d'être ton amant, je deviendrai ton père.» Il a tenu parole. O mon cher Octave! nous ne passerons jamais une nuit ensemble sans nous agenouiller et sans prier pour Jacques. (p. 1016)

This was an offer which she had previously rejected, and her reference to it at this late stage in the text has the effect of demonstrating that Jacques was correct in his judgement and hence of emphasising both his superiority and infallibility. Fernande now simply thanks Jacques for his willingness to cede his place as her lover to Octave, and the role which Jacques's aloofness, apparent indifference and refusal to communicate with her might have played in the breakdown of their marriage is no longer considered: for Fernande, at least, it is no longer an issue, and Jacques never considers himself to have been to blame. Fernande's reference to the nights she spends with Octave serves only to heighten the impression of this couple's egoistical happiness being earned at the expense of Jacques's sacrifice. I do not wish to suggest that this is a completely false representation of events: the text certainly provides evidence of Octave and Fernande's egoistical desire for happiness, particularly when

Octave does not hesitate to evoke the possibility of Jacques dying and thus leaving him and Fernande free to marry. But I would suggest that the text is organised in such a way as to underline the rigidity of this distinction, for despite the absence of a single narrator who tells the story, there is nonetheless in the novel a structuring force at work in the form of an editor.

Jan Herman stresses the importance of taking into account the role of the external narrator in the epistolary novel: he no longer tells the story but instead organises and orchestrates the voices of the correspondents. Herman writes:

Dans le roman par lettres, le narrateur extérieur se retire et narre *par le biais d'un discours épistolaire*, plus ou moins narratif, du personnage. La narration y est donc médiatisée par l'énoncé d'un actant intérieur. Cette médiation de la narration est cause de l'apparente disparition du narrateur extérieur. Celui-ci ne disparaît pas, bien entendu, il se voile. L'effacement du discours du narrateur [. . .] n'entraîne pas la disparition de l'instance narrative à laquelle incombent d'autres tâches, métanarratives celles-ci.<sup>17</sup>

Herman defines this metanarrative role as that of 'la collecte, [. . .] la sélection et [. . .] la disposition des lettres' (p. 83), and it is precisely these functions of the editor which transform an unstructured collection of letters (the prototext) into a novel. Although Herman does not examine the potential ideological bias of the editor, it is clear that in the selection and organisation of letters within the text, there is scope for highlighting the roles of certain characters, and for editing out letters which might present an unfavourable view of these characters. As in the narratives discussed in chapter one, the unity and coherence of the novel may depend on the repression or exclusion of certain voices.

In *Jacques* a footnote attests to the role the editor plays in structuring the correspondence, for this reveals that not all the letters available have been included in the published text. The editor informs us that:

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<sup>17</sup> Jan Herman, *Le Mensonge romanesque* (Amsterdam: Rodopi; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), p. 52 (italics in original).

Le lecteur ne doit pas oublier que beaucoup de lettres ont été supprimées de cette collection. Les seules que l'éditeur ait cru devoir publier sont celles qui établissent certains faits et certains sentiments nécessaires à la suite et à la clarté des biographies; celles qui ne servaient qu'à confirmer ces faits, ou qui les développaient avec la prolixité des relations familières, ont été retranchées avec discernement. (p. 934)

Two considerations, we are told, have guided the editor in his transformation of a collection of letters into a volume worthy of literary interest: aesthetics, and the logical and clear progression of the plot ('la suite et [...] la clarté des biographies'). Already this implies a position on what constitutes good literature, and the missing letter to which this note refers is perhaps indicative of what the editor considers to be expendable in order to assure the aesthetic and logical unity of the text. The letter which has been omitted from the published text is not one of Jacques's letters engaging in discussion with Sylvia, but a letter from Octave to Fernande. What is sacrificed is a letter of emotions, rather than one which develops Jacques and Sylvia's intellectual and philosophical exchanges. In this case, the 'feminine' plot, the private storyline characterised by 'la prolixité des relations familières', is relegated to the sphere of the non-essential. Moreover, this is not the first example of such editorial bias, for at the beginning of the novel, Clémence's reply to a letter from Fernande is not included, though Fernande's next letter alludes to this missing letter: 'tu dis que j'ai bien fait de te raconter tout cela' (p. 835). Later, the following remark from Fernande reveals that after her angry reaction to Clémence's condemnation of her relationship with Octave, three of her letters to Clémence and one reply from Clémence have not been included: 'tu m'as boudée bien longtemps, et tu as attendu trois lettres de moi pour me dire enfin que tu étais fâchée' (p. 942). Until almost the end of the novel all the evidence suggests that it is letters either to or from Fernande which are cut: Octave mentions in letter 75 a *billet* he sent to Fernande, and which is not included (p. 981); Jacques refers to a short note he has received from Fernande, which is similarly absent; finally letters from Jacques to Fernande are alluded to by Octave when he writes to Herbert that 'Jacques [...] lui écrit rarement' (p. 1007), but none of these is included. The effect of the novel being organised in this way is to establish a hierarchy of voices in which Jacques and Sylvia have privileged status.



There is, however, one letter from Sylvia to Jacques which has not been published. The existence of this letter is indicated by Jacques, for the note he received from Fernande, referred to above, was enclosed in a letter from Sylvia. Both are omitted from the novel. To have included Sylvia's letter but not Fernande's note would have indicated definite editorial bias, which the exclusion of both serves to conceal. Yet one can posit another reason for Sylvia's letter not being included, since its content relates to the emotional storyline, and in particular to Fernande. Its exclusion thus does not detract from the philosophical content of the novel.

It is in fact possible to suggest that letters which might lead one to nuance the positive image of Jacques are absent from the published text. Their content may however be referred to by other characters. This is the case for the letters from Sylvia and Fernande to Jacques, referred to above. When Jacques replies to Sylvia's letter, he gives his understanding of Fernande's behaviour:

Je te remercie de m'assurer qu'elle [Fernande] se porte tout à fait bien, que les belles couleurs de la santé reviennent à ses joues, et qu'elle pleure sa fille moins souvent et moins amèrement. [. . .] Ma mort ne pourrait que lui faire du bien. [. . .] Elle pourrait épouser Octave par la suite, et le scandale malheureux que leurs amours ont fait ici serait à jamais terminé.

Tu me dis précisément qu'elle s'afflige beaucoup de l'idée de ce scandale [. . .]. Tu me dis qu'elle demande à toute heure s'il est possible que cette aventure ne m'arrive pas à Paris. (pp. 996-97)

Jacques finds in Sylvia's letter proof that Fernande no longer loves him and that she thinks not of him, but of the potential scandal which news of her relationship with Octave could generate. Moreover, her recovery to full health and happiness is contrasted with his thoughts of death. The absence of both Sylvia's and Fernande's letters means that as readers we lack the necessary information to challenge this interpretation. Jacques's description of Fernande's letter as 'bien affectueuse et bien laconique' (p. 996) gives little away, the second adjective cancelling out the positive effect of the first. Perhaps Jacques's interpretation is in fact as impartial and authoritative as it appears. Yet Sylvia's next letter contains a mild rebuttal of



Jacques's attitude towards his wife. She writes: 'Octave tâche de saper le piédestal où tu as mérité de monter. [. . .] Fernande te défend avec plus de vigueur que tu ne penses, et sa vénération résiste à toutes les atteintes' (p. 999). Whilst Sylvia does not suggest that Fernande still loves Jacques, and refers instead to her happiness with Octave, she nonetheless highlights Fernande's periods of remorse and tries to counter what she sees as Jacques's excessively negative view of his wife. But these remarks find few echoes in this part of the novel, and are given little priority in a letter in which Sylvia expresses her respect for, and attachment to Jacques, and which ends on praise for Jacques's behaviour: 'Tu n'es occupé, au sein de cet océan de douleurs, qu'à lui [Fernande] éviter la centième partie de celles que tu ressens' (p. 999). This is an impression which is reinforced in Sylvia's final letter to Jacques, when she writes:

O Dieu! un homme comme Jacques va se tuer, et vous ne ferez pas un miracle pour l'en empêcher! Vous allez laisser tomber cette vie sainte et sublime dans le gouffre de l'éternité, comme un grain de sable dans l'Océan; elle s'en ira pêle-mêle avec celles des méchants et des lâches, et la création tout entière ne se révoltera pas contre vous pour refuser son sacrifice! Ton malheur fera de moi un athée à mon dernier soupir, ô Jacques! (p. 1021)

This emotional and even excessive tone is characteristic of her final letter, which states clearly her view of Jacques as an exceptional being, above humanity, rejected by an ungrateful and uncomprehending world. When she describes him as having been 'détesté par les méchants, raillé par les sots, craint des envieux, abandonné des faibles' (p. 1022) before returning to God and leaving a world 'vil et odieux' (ibid.), she makes an implicit comparison between Jacques and Jesus. In so doing, she echoes an allusion in Jacques's first letter to the similarities between his fate and that of Jesus. He had written: 'Pourquoi mon front est-il ceint d'épines qui le déchirent à chaque souffle de vent dans les fleurs dont les autres se couronnent' (p. 844). Although exaggerated, the powerful final image Sylvia gives of Jacques emphasises the image he has himself projected of his superiority and heroism, qualities which have largely gone unquestioned in the novel.

Everything to do with the selection and ordering of letters in this novel can be read as designed to portray Jacques as worthy of our respect or of our sympathy. The only letters from Jacques which we know have been cut are those he writes to Fernande, and, as I shall argue, Jacques's weak point is his emotional side, his inability to relate to Fernande as a lover and husband, that is to say on an emotional rather than an intellectual level. This privileging of the philosophical plot centred on Jacques and his exchanges with Sylvia is designed to underline his superiority. It also reveals the workings of a non-neutral editorial presence which seeks to restrict the complex interplay of voices in the novel and guide the reader towards an interpretation of the text based on the supremacy of Jacques's voice.

If the editor's selection of letters for publication underscores Jacques's central role and encourages acceptance of his view of events, the organisation of letters in the novel may also be seen to participate in this same project. This aspect of the novel's composition is studied by Regina Bochenek-Franczakowa, who looks particularly at the sequencing of the letters from Jacques and Fernande at the beginning of the second part of the novel. In this part of the text, Fernande's version of events is given first in her letters to Clémence, followed by Jacques's explanation in his letters to Sylvia. These letters are written some six months into their marriage, and record Fernande's incomprehension at Jacques's behaviour (in particular his reaction to a love song she has been singing, when, visibly moved by the piece, he asks her to sing it again, but then destroys the musical score the following day), her own imaginings as to what could be at the root of such conduct, and then Jacques's explanation of events. Bochenek-Franczakowa argues that such a sequence gives the text a linear progression which moves from 'l'ignorance à la lucidité, [. . .] l'opacité à la transparence',<sup>18</sup> and that as a result Jacques is given 'une crédibilité narrative incontestable' (ibid.) and becomes a spokesman for the opinions of the author.

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<sup>18</sup> Bochenek-Franczakowa, 'George Sand et le roman par lettres: le cas de *Jacques*', p. 30.

It would be difficult to deny that certain of the opinions voiced by Jacques could easily be ascribed in their entirety to Sand herself. One thinks principally of his much-quoted views on the institution of marriage, included in a letter to Sylvia:

Je n'ai pas changé d'avis, je ne me suis pas réconcilié avec la société, et le mariage est toujours, selon moi, une des plus barbares institutions qu'elle ait ébauchées. Je ne doute pas qu'il ne soit aboli, si l'espèce humaine fait quelque progrès vers la justice et la raison; un lien plus humain et non moins sacré remplacera celui-là, et saura assurer l'existence des enfants qui naîtront d'un homme et d'une femme, sans enchaîner à jamais la liberté de l'un et de l'autre. Mais les hommes sont trop grossiers et les femmes trop lâches pour demander une loi plus noble que la loi de fer qui les régit. (p. 834)

Even the element of superiority evident at the end of this passage could not be deemed entirely out of character for Sand, since she did on occasion adopt a superior tone with women whose cause she nonetheless claimed to be defending in her writing.<sup>19</sup> Although Jacques's theoretical position on marriage appears entirely reasonable and indeed consistent with the author's own views on marriage, when one analyses these opinions as part of a wider philosophy and takes into account his practical application of these ideas, a number of important inconsistencies and contradictions are revealed.

In *Jacques* there is a lack of understanding and exchange between the eponymous hero and Fernande. It is perhaps this, more than any inherent incompatibility, which is at the root of the failure of their marriage, for it is the contrast between Jacques's unwillingness to communicate, and Octave's desire to confide in her, which initially makes the latter appear so appealing to Fernande. This lack of communication between husband and wife is highlighted at the beginning of part two of the novel (letters 19-26), when Jacques and Fernande write to Sylvia and Clémence about the problems in their relationship, but do not appear to talk to each other about these

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<sup>19</sup> One of the most notable examples of this is her 1848 response to those women who had proposed her candidature to the Assemblée Nationale. In this letter she writes: 'je ne puis permettre que, sans mon aveu, on me prenne pour l'enseigne d'un cénacle féminin avec lequel je n'ai jamais eu la moindre relation agréable ou fâcheuse' (*Correspondance*, VIII (1971), p. 392).

issues in any meaningful way. One of the reasons for this is Jacques's unwillingness to relate to Fernande on an intellectual level. When, during the early months of their marriage, she notices that he is more quiet than usual and seems depressed, she reproaches him for not opening up to her and for treating her like a 'petite fille' (p. 875). He replies: 'je te traite comme tu le mérites [ . . . ] et c'est parce que tu es un enfant que je t'adore' (ibid.). Indeed, Jacques has always stressed Fernande's childlike nature, and in his first description of his future wife, her qualities can all be related to the fact that he views her as a child: 'une vierge, une enfant belle comme la vérité, vraie comme la beauté, simple, confiante' (p. 833). Later, in his second letter to her on the subject of marriage, he exhorts her always to remain 'naïve comme l'enfance' (p. 857). It would be impossible to deny Fernande's childish nature, and she herself acknowledges it. In her first letter to Clémence, she admits: 'Je suis encore trop pensionnaire. Il faudra que Jacques me corrige de cela' (p. 816). This is a feeling which she reiterates when faced with what she perceives to be Jacques's indifference, for she writes to Clémence: 'je suis un enfant, j'ai besoin qu'on me guide et qu'on me relève quand je tombe' (p. 889). Her childishness is later juxtaposed to Jacques's serious nature, since in reply to his letter on marriage, she reminds him of their first meeting and how his arrival in her life appeared to her like something out of a fairytale. She writes:

Il n'y a pas longtemps que je lisais encore des contes de fées [ . . . ]. C'était toujours une pauvre fille maltraitée, abandonnée, ou captive, qui, par les fentes de sa prison, ou du haut d'un des arbres du désert, voyait passer, comme dans un rêve, le plus beau prince du monde escorté de toutes les richesses et de toutes les joies de la terre. Alors la fée entassait prodiges sur prodiges pour délivrer sa protégée; et un beau jour Cendrillon voyait l'amour et le monde à ses pieds. Il me semble que c'est là mon histoire. (p. 854)

Fernande's view of her relationship as part of a fairytale sits in strong contrast to Jacques's letter in which he underlines the impossibility of eternal love and addresses the possibility that one day they may no longer love each other. The childish side to her optimism, when juxtaposed with the seriousness of Jacques's views, also points up the important differences between their two characters, and these are differences

which Jacques is not prepared to work to bridge, despite Fernande's desire that he educate and guide her so that she become more like him.

Whilst it would be paternalistic to suggest that it is the husband's role to change his wife, Fernande certainly wants to be able to understand Jacques: her first letters to Clémence manifest a concern to know about Jacques, and later letters attest to her unhappiness faced with what she sees as his unwillingness to let her know him. As in the examples quoted above, when she acknowledges her childishness, she often views it as a failing and wants Jacques to help her and guide her. This he refuses to do, preferring instead to preserve her innocence. He admits to Sylvia that he does not want to confide his melancholy and sadness to Fernande: 'je veux [ . . . ] cacher cette tristesse qui se communiquerait bien vite à ma pauvre enfant' (p. 877). However, it is not just her innocence which Jacques values, for in her first letter to Clémence after her marriage, Fernande recognises that Jacques also likes her simplicity and ignorance. She writes:

Je ne désire pas [ . . . ] orner mon esprit; *Jacques se plaît à ma simplicité*; et lui, qui sait tout, m'en apprendra certainement plus en causant avec moi que tous les livres du monde. (p. 870, my italics)

Fernande is perceptive in her assessment of what Jacques likes about her, though her hope that she will learn through conversation with him is misplaced, for he will consistently refuse to engage in discussion with her. It seems strange that a husband so apparently enlightened as Jacques, someone who refuses to accept that a wife's submission and obedience should be central tenets of marriage, should find his wife's ignorance so appealing. He even rejects Sylvia's suggestion that he undertake to educate Fernande in the same way as he had educated her when she was a child. She encourages him to do this by writing: 'quel être sublime ne pourras-tu pas faire de celle qui est ta femme et qui possède ton amour' (p. 884). He however replies:

Cette forte éducation que je n'avais pas craint de te donner, je n'aurais jamais osé l'essayer avec Fernande; [ . . . ] elle avait ce caractère adorable, mais funeste, que l'on appelle romanesque, et qui consiste à ne voir les choses ni comme elles sont dans la société, ni comme elles sont dans la nature; elle croyait à un amour éternel, à un repos que rien ne devait

troubler. Un instant j'eus envie d'essayer son courage et de lui dire qu'elle se trompait; mais ce courage me manqua à moi-même. (p. 893)

Jacques claims that his reason for not talking frankly with her is that he does not wish to shatter her illusions and her faith in the future by making her aware of the negative aspects of life. He does not want to be forced to say to her: 'Voilà que ton amour s'en va; il en devait être ainsi et il en sera de même de tous les bonheurs de ta vie!' (ibid.). He concludes:

Je ne puis causer avec elle, tu le vois! il m'arriverait de me faire détester, et un matin elle lirait mes trente-cinq ans sur mon visage. Il faut que je la traite en enfant le plus longtemps possible; au fait, je pourrais être son père, pourquoi dérogerai-je à ce rôle? Je ne la consolerais, je ne prolongerais son amour, s'il est possible, que par de douces paroles et de douces caresses. (ibid.)

Jacques's lack of communication with Fernande is presented as a means of maintaining their relationship and as an attempt on his part to preserve her happiness by keeping her in a state of blissful ignorance. Yet Fernande is not happy, for she perceives his aloofness and adoption of a more paternal role in the relationship as signs of his lack of love for her. Early in the marriage she had complained to Clémence about Jacques's unwillingness to confide in her and to tell her about his worries: 'Je m'en inquiéterais moins s'il me les confiait; mais il est silencieux comme la tombe et me traite comme une personne tout à fait à part de lui' (p. 877). Later, referring to the same incident that Jacques discusses in his letter with Sylvia (above), Fernande gives her interpretation of her husband's unwillingness to talk openly with her:

Il est trop grave, trop silencieux dans ses avis. Les résolutions qu'il prend, la promptitude avec laquelle il tranche les sujets de troubles entre nous, montrent, ce me semble, une espèce de hauteur méprisante à mon égard. (p. 889)

Far from finding Jacques's behaviour reassuring, Fernande finds it distant and authoritative. One can undoubtedly appreciate why she feels like this, for Jacques places himself in the position of authority in the relationship and decides what is best for his wife, without ever taking into account her views, and this despite all that he



has said against husbands' domination of their wives. He is, for example, upset when Fernande, perplexed by his silence, implores his love, and he writes to Sylvia: 'Ce n'est pas ainsi que je veux être aimé; inspirer à ma femme le sentiment qu'un esclave a pour son maître!' (p. 891). In fact, although Jacques does not invoke Fernande's submission to his authority when he becomes aware of her adulterous relationship with Octave, his relationship to her is nonetheless built on his assumption that she will submit unquestioningly to his opinions. It is for this reason that he so likes Fernande's simplicity and ignorance. Considered in this light, there is something sinister in what he says to justify his intention to marry Fernande:

Ce que j'ai amassé de force et d'indépendance durant toute une vie de solitude et de haine, je veux en faire profiter l'objet de mon affection, *un être faible, opprimé, pauvre, et qui me devra tout*; je veux lui donner un bonheur inconnu ici-bas. (pp. 834-35, my italics)

Fernande's happiness depends on her unquestioning acceptance of all that Jacques does and says. He cannot cope with her requests for justifications or explanations. He acts like a father to her, but not like a loving father who guides and educates her: rather he is the voice of authority which lays down the law, he who holds the Absolute Truth.

This becomes clear when Fernande confronts him with her worries about the arrival of Sylvia. He replies: 'Est-ce que tu me croirais capable d'une lâcheté? [. . .] Mais d'une trahison? [. . .] Mais de quoi alors? [. . .] Explique-toi' (p. 895). His questions are revealing, for he does not consider in what way his behaviour could have provoked Fernande's suspicions, nor does he offer her more information, thus elucidating the situation and allaying her fears. Instead he reads her suspicions as putting his good character into question, and by reaffirming this in his questions, he in effect places Fernande in the wrong for having doubted his perfection and infallibility. Jacques has promised not to dominate his wife physically, not to force her by threats and brutality to submit herself to his will, and yet he has clearly chosen as his wife a woman whom he knows will not constitute a challenge to his superiority, to his intellectual domination of the relationship. Such domination is an essential part of Jacques's

relationship with Fernande. When one looks more closely at his reasons for marrying, one can see that his own desires remain at all times central. He explains his choice of wife to Sylvia in these terms:

Fernande n'est pas ton égale; nulle ne l'est en ce monde, Sylvia; c'est pourquoi je ne la cherche pas. Il y a longtemps que je marche seul dans un chemin pénible; il faut que je m'appuie sur un cœur paisible et pur; le tien ne peut pas *m'appartenir* exclusivement; il faut que je *m'empare* de celui-ci qui n'a encore connu que moi. [. . .] Le caractère de Fernande est ce qu'il est; je l'étudie, je le *possède*, et je traiterai avec lui en conséquence. Quand j'étais jeune, je croyais à un être créé pour moi. Je le cherchais dans les natures les plus opposées [. . .]. C'est ainsi que j'ai aggravé mes maux et que j'ai souvent connu le découragement. Amour romanesque! tourment et chimère des années fécondes de la vie! [. . .] Je suis un homme encore bien jeune de cœur, qui aime fortement une jeune fille, et qui l'épouse pour deux raisons: la première, parce que c'est l'unique moyen de la *posséder*; la seconde, parce que c'est l'unique moyen de l'arracher des mains d'une méchante mère, et de lui procurer une vie honorable et indépendante. (pp. 833-34, my italics)

Jacques's repeated use of verbs denoting ownership seems inconsistent with his pronouncements against domination and submission within the marital relationship. It is in fact revealing of the lack of equality between the two partners. As Jacques makes clear, possessing Fernande is one of the principal factors in his decision to marry her. She is seen firstly as providing the element of companionship which is lacking in his life, a role which Sylvia cannot fulfil since she is potentially his half-sister. He has now given up looking for the ideal woman of whom he had dreamt in his youth, and the woman he has chosen might almost be described as the opposite of his ideal, especially since he links his choice of Fernande as wife to the fact that he cannot possess Sylvia's heart exclusively. Secondly, marrying Fernande is a way of removing her from the control of a woman whose influence he sees as pernicious. Despite his assertion of his strong love for Fernande, there is little in his letter to justify his claim that his marriage to Fernande is 'un mariage d'amour' (p. 834). The penultimate paragraph of this letter seems rather to indicate that love plays a small role in his decision to marry Fernande:

J'ai vécu seul, méprisant l'activité d'autrui, et me lavant les mains devant Dieu des impuretés de la race humaine; à présent je veux vivre deux [sic],

et donner à un être semblable à moi le repos et la liberté qui m'ont été refusés de tous. Ce que j'ai amassé de force et d'indépendance durant toute une vie de solitude et de haine, je veux en faire profiter l'objet de mon affection [. . .]; je veux, au nom de la société que je méprise, lui assurer les biens que la société refuse aux femmes. Je veux que la mienne soit un être noble, fier et sincère; telle que la nature l'a faite, je veux la conserver [. . .]. J'ai embrassé cette idée-là comme un but à ma triste et stérile existence, et je me persuade que, si je réussis, ma vie ne sera pas absolument perdue. (pp. 834-85)

Two further reasons for marriage are given here: since his marriage will exclude all social conventions and the traditional power hierarchy between husband and wife, and will also oppose the legal status normally given to women in marriage, it becomes an act of defiance on his part against a society which he despises, and the bringing of this project to a successful completion becomes a means for him of giving purpose to his life. Fernande, it would seem, becomes simply an object around which greater debates and battles are enacted. Her feelings and desires are given no consideration, and there is an implicit assumption that she should be happy to be marrying someone as exceptional as Jacques, and that she will benefit from this union. Jacques points to a number of the advantages she will enjoy in marriage: rescued from her mother's control she will be assured of a more honourable existence; her material situation will be improved; she will not suffer the tyranny of an unjust husband; and she should, as a result, be assured a happy existence. But whatever advantages Fernande may be promised can be seen as merely incidental in a union instigated by, and centred around, Jacques. This becomes most apparent when he writes to Fernande about marriage and promises not to act as her master, but to be a father figure to her and to allow her complete freedom should she cease to love him. Although this is in itself admirable, he excludes love from his discussions, and this is an omission which he acknowledges:

Je ne vous parlerai pas d'amour. Il me serait impossible de vous prouver que le mien doit vous rendre éternellement heureuse; [. . .] je puis dire seulement qu'il est sincère et profond. C'est du mariage que je veux vous parler dans cette lettre, et l'amour est une chose à part. (p. 852)

Viewed from the perspective of cold logic and reason, Jacques is of course right: love may not last eternally, whilst, in theory, marriage is a lifelong commitment. Fernande does not however think in these terms, and in her reply she rejects his promises in favour of an expression of love:

Ce ne sont pas les malheurs vulgaires de la société qui m'inquiètent; c'est l'amour que vous avez pour moi, c'est surtout celui que je ressens pour vous. Vous ne voulez pas m'en parler, Jacques, et c'est la seule chose qui m'occupe et m'intéresse. [...] Je ne veux pas de ces autres serments, je n'en ai pas besoin. Ils ont l'air d'un traité, d'une capitulation entre nous. Quand vous me pressez sur votre cœur en me disant: «O mon enfant, que je t'aime!» je suis bien plus sûre de mon bonheur. (pp. 855-56)

That Jacques should alert Fernande to the ephemeral nature of love and make it clear that he will respect the freedom of her heart seems enlightened on his part. Yet surely there is a contradiction in his act of writing to Fernande? The content of this letter can only have the effect of corrupting Fernande's innocence, of destroying her naive faith in eternal happiness, and it is precisely this reason which is invoked by Jacques on a number of occasions later in the novel to explain his unwillingness to discuss serious matters with Fernande and to explain himself to her. Although his first attempt to make her understand was unsuccessful, the very fact that he wrote to her would indicate that these were important issues to him, and furthermore point to his desire that she should understand them. So important are these issues that in his next letter he again takes up this theme and, in the midst of an exhortation to hope and an affirmation that he will love her for as long as she wants his love, he repeats the same message that love is not eternal, and more specifically that her love for him may not last eternally. He desires it, but knows it may not be true, hence his offer of paternal love and friendship. Despite the potential for such an exchange leading to increased understanding between the two partners, it in fact serves to set the two of them apart and to emphasise their basic difference: Fernande privileges the emotional, Jacques the cerebral, and it is for this reason that she later regrets the fact that their relations are not based on more 'abandon [...] épanchement et [...] camaraderie' (p. 896, italics in original).

This exchange of letters also reveals Jacques's need to repress or exclude the emotional and irrational from his existence. When, in a letter to Sylvia, Jacques defends his decision to marry, his description of Fernande as 'un être semblable à [lui]' (p. 834) is surprising, all the more so as a few lines later he describes her as an 'être faible, opprimé, pauvre' (p. 835). What seems to attract Jacques to Fernande is the fact that he sees her as 'sauvage' (p. 833), that is to say, untainted by society because of her youth and innocence. It is this 'natural' state which he hopes to preserve. But he soon discovers that Fernande is tainted by society, both as a result of her upbringing and her contact with people such as Clémence. The one woman who appears in the novel as Jacques's double is Sylvia, and this affinity is noted not only by Sylvia and Jacques themselves, but by other characters. Early in the novel Jacques writes to Sylvia that 'il y a entre nous un sentiment plus fort que l'amour' (p. 845), a fact which Sylvia acknowledges in one of her letters to Jacques when she asks: 'quels êtres sommes-nous, et pourquoi voulons-nous toujours vivre la même vie que les autres?' (p. 848). The exceptional nature of their common bond is stressed by Jacques, who writes: 'toi [. . .] seule au monde comprends le vieux Jacques et compatis aux souffrances de son orgueil' (p. 866). In his penultimate letter to Sylvia he reinforces this idea when he writes, 'toi qui es pleine de raison et dont l'amitié vaut mieux que l'amour des autres' (p. 1025). Fernande too notes the similarities between these two characters, and writes of Sylvia:

Son âge, son éducation et son caractère la rapprochent de Jacques, et doivent établir entre eux une confiance bien mieux fondée. [. . .] Je n'entends rien à leur courage, à leurs principes d'héroïsme et de stoïcisme. (p. 909)

In a later letter she describes Jacques and Sylvia as being 'à la hauteur l'un de l'autre' (p. 922). However, between these two characters there lies the interdict of incest, for Sylvia is potentially Jacques's half-sister. Vareille suggests an reading of the incest motif in *Jacques*, in which she argues that it is placed between Jacques and Sylvia as an obstacle to their love because the kind of relationship they would enjoy would be, as a result of their similarity, based on true equality, without the submission of one

partner to the other, and would thus involve a new conception of both masculinity and femininity. She concludes:

Or, en 1834, une telle union égalitaire et non oppressive entre homme et femme paraît, au sens le plus fort du terme, impensable à Sand [. . .]. C'est pourquoi [. . .] l'inceste symbolique, s'il apparaît bien comme agent de rapprochement des sexes dans la mesure où il augmente la compréhension et les points de contact entre homme et femme, fonctionne surtout comme obstacle.<sup>20</sup>

The argument is a convincing one, for there is no firm evidence that the union of Jacques and Sylvia would be incestuous. It is also true that the unions formed in this period of Sand's writing are not equal, perhaps despite appearances: in the couples Indiana-Ralph, Valentine-Bénédict, and even Edmée-Bernard, there is a dominant partner. It is perhaps only with *Consuelo* in 1842-43, or more precisely *La Comtesse de Rudolstadt* (1844), that one sees the formation of a union based on equality. Vareille argues that Jacques rejects a society based on masculine values and that 'son culte de l'amour prend donc les allures d'une glorification du principe féminin' (p. 285). This would explain why Jacques views Fernande as being similar to him, for he aligns himself with a feminine principle which she embodies. But, according to Vareille, his love and marriage with Fernande bring him back to the social, for women are conditioned by society. For Vareille, this explains the lack of communication in love, since it is based on a refusal to interact with a real woman. She writes: 'il ne veut pas avoir à constater à quel point elle [Fernande] est - elle encore - marquée par les préjugés de cette société qu'il déteste tant' (p. 286). Vareille sees evidence in Jacques's past for her idea that he idolises *woman* as abstract concept, since he has broken off previous relationships when he has noticed what Sylvia describes as: 'une tache sur l'objet de [son] amour' (p. 840).

Vareille's reading of the novel is an engaging one, but it is possible to suggest another interpretation of the incest motif, taking as a starting point the story of Jacques's previous loves, told to Fernande by Capitaine Jean. He tells her of Jacques's love for

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<sup>20</sup> Vareille, *Socialité, sexualité et les impasses de l'histoire*, p. 299.



various beautiful women who were all unfaithful to him, and he places the blame for the failure of the relationships on these women who, according to him, were 'belles comme des anges et méchantes comme des démons, avides, ambitieuses, intrigantes et despotiques' (p. 846). But was their infidelity a consequence of their character, or might one be justified in saying that if Jacques treated them in the same way as he treated Fernande, then their unfaithfulness is related to the distance he placed between himself and them? This hypothesis is given greater credibility when one reads Jacques's 'confession' to Sylvia in his penultimate letter. In this he admits:

Il n'y a que toi au monde qui ne m'aies jamais fait que du bien. Toi seule me comprenais, toi seule pensais comme moi. Il semblait qu'une même âme nous animât, et que la plus noble partie te fût échue en partage. Comme tu m'as préféré à tes amants, je t'aurais préférée à mes maîtresses, si je n'avais craint, en m'abandonnant à cette affection si vive, d'aller plus loin que je ne voulais. [ . . . ] Mes désirs et mes transports ont toujours placé entre nous, comme une sauvegarde, une amante qui recevait mes caresses, mais qui n'empêchait pas ma vénération de remonter toujours vers toi. (p. 1025)

Jacques's lovers have therefore functioned as obstacles between himself and Sylvia to prevent incest. This might explain the distance he adopts towards these women, Fernande included, and his unwillingness to communicate with them: his lovers must not be women who can rival Sylvia and block out his intellectual relationship with her. His real relationship is with the woman who resembles him, but who could be his half-sister, and these other women simply provide an outlet for his physical desires. There is nothing in his marriage to Fernande which would contradict such an argument, and indeed one might view Jacques's choice of wife (Sylvia's half-sister) as a substitute for the woman he cannot marry because of the doubts surrounding Sylvia's paternity. His unwillingness to communicate with Fernande on an intellectual level is thus linked to his desire to preserve his intellectual links with Sylvia alone. This might also explain the freedom he is prepared to give to Fernande in marriage, for she is not really the woman he loves, but simply a means of coming closer to Sylvia, the true object of his affection, and also of placing an obstacle between them. It is even possible to read into this complex relationship, whereby Jacques loves Sylvia through Fernande, thus preventing physical union between brother and sister, a reason for the

deaths of his two children. Are these not in a sense the product of a pseudo-incestuous union? And was Sylvia not in fact right in asserting her rights to the role of mother when she said: 'ces enfants-là sont à moi' (p. 907), for Jacques's real relationship was with Sylvia, not with Fernande? This offers another perspective on the deaths of the twins, for these may be related as much to the original fault of the father as to the mother's adulterous liaison. It may also explain why there were twins, for the deaths of the two children function as punishments for the passions of *both* Fernande and Jacques. Fernande is not the sole guilty partner in this marriage, and views of Jacques as superior and admirable, if not wrong, need to be nuanced in the light of close analysis of the text.

This is perhaps all the more true as Jacques does not seem to accept any blame for the breakdown in relations between himself and Fernande, particularly following the episode of the love song. For instance, when he writes to Sylvia about Fernande's behaviour he firstly absolves himself of all guilt: 'je n'ai pas commis d'injustice, je n'ai pas agi en mari' (p. 889). He then goes on to place the future of his marriage in Fernande's hands: 'si quelque révolution ne s'opère dans les idées de Fernande, nous aurons bientôt cessé d'être amants' (ibid.). He adds later: 'Je n'ai pas cessé d'aimer encore; je serais encore prêt, si Fernande pouvait calmer ses agitations et réparer d'elle-même le mal qu'elle nous a fait, à oublier ces orages et à retourner à l'enivrement des premiers jours; mais je ne me flatte pas que ce miracle puisse s'opérer en elle' (p. 890). Even when he recognises that his way of loving her may be at issue, he continues to see Fernande's inability to understand it as the problem: 'Mon amour devient trop sévère pour elle; elle se croit obligée de l'implorer, elle ne le comprend plus' (p. 891). It is hardly surprising that Fernande does not understand his love, for he has never tried to explain it to her in the same way as he has to Sylvia. When he writes to her about marriage, he bases the future of their union on adherence to his wishes and does not consider how she feels or what she wants from marriage. He assumes that his desires will accord with hers, and the relationship he envisages thus rests on him occupying the dominant position.

Whereas Jacques's pronouncements on marriage give the impression of an enlightened individual who rejects the rules and institutions of an unjust society, the reality of his relations with Fernande renders this interpretation somewhat problematic. It is worth reiterating at this point that those letters from Jacques which we know to have been cut from the published correspondence are those he writes to Fernande, those relating to the emotional rather than philosophical storyline. The superior role accorded to Jacques can thus be read as built on the privileging of his relationship with Sylvia. It is around these two characters that the serious content of the novel is structured, with the result that other voices are marginalised: towards the end of the novel, for example, Fernande is increasingly silenced, and of the 43 letters included in this part, only six are from her. Whilst the proximity of Octave and his interception of Clémence's letters provide justification for Fernande's relative absence from the narrative plane, one can argue that this absence is not entirely coincidental given the editor's attempts to present the eponymous hero positively. It is on this aspect of *Jacques* that critics have largely focused, and the 'message' of the novel thus becomes centred on the apparent superiority and authority of one voice. However, when approached as a multi-voiced novel, and read as a complex interplay of voices, *Jacques* tells a different story.

If the background role of the editor as organiser of the material of *Jacques* can be seen as important for the presentation of the voice of the eponymous hero as authoritative, this figure assumes even greater importance in *Mademoiselle la Quintinie* (1863), for this novel is characterised by greater didactic purpose than *Jacques*. In her preface Sand defends her decision to treat a serious subject (religion) in a fictional work, and speaks with approval of those who try to 'réhabiliter le roman et [. . .] l'élever à l'état de thèse'.<sup>21</sup> Godwin-Jones develops this idea when he describes the novel as a classic *roman à thèse*, and argues that 'Sand's primary goal in writing *Mademoiselle la Quintinie* was to attack the Catholic Church'.<sup>22</sup> The novel

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<sup>21</sup> George Sand, *Mademoiselle la Quintinie* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1979), p.v. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text

<sup>22</sup> Godwin-Jones, *Romantic Vision*, p. 279.

charts the progression of the relationship between Lucie la Quintinie and Émile Lemontier, and the obstacles that are placed in their way by their differing religious beliefs (Lucie is a Catholic, whereas Émile is a secular free-thinker). These obstacles are increased with the involvement of Émile's father, the resistance of Lucie's father to her marriage with a non-Catholic, and the machinations of the mysterious priest Moreali. There can be little doubt that the construction of the text and its undeviating anti-Catholic rhetoric affirm a didactic intent, consistent with the religious views which Sand held at the time of writing. These are made explicit in the preface's censure of uncritical acceptance of Church doctrine, described as 'une ombre' rather than 'un principe' (p. ix). In the novel, the representatives of the Catholic faith are portrayed negatively as both narrow-minded and intolerant, and the marriage of Émile and Lucie is founded on the latter's renunciation of Catholicism. However, although it is the vehemently anti-Catholic stance of the novel which has most interested critics, what is significant in *Mademoiselle la Quintinie* from the perspective of this study is the transition effected from epistolary to third-person narrative, for in the final third of the text, the editor of the correspondences, which up to this point had been the vehicle for the unfolding of the story, assumes a narrative function.

The ending of the letter narrative is to some extent justified by the events of the novel, since it corresponds to the arrival of Émile's father, who had been the principal receiver of letters, on the scene of the action. This, however, also coincides with the departure of Émile, so that the physical separation of two major protagonists, essential for a correspondence to be maintained, is in fact retained. That this distance is not exploited for the prolongation of the epistolary form serves to underscore the importance of the transition to a third-person narrative.

It is Lucie's refusal to accept the role of submissive woman which creates the conflict and debate around which the epistolary section of the novel is structured. More importantly, it is ultimately her submission to her husband's authority and her acceptance of an object role which create the conditions for the resolution of the conflict. This also coincides with the introduction of the third-person narrator who



leads the story to a successful and happy conclusion. It is in the final letter of the epistolary section of the novel that Lucie writes to M. Lemontier and reveals both the extent of her love for Émile and her willingness to sacrifice her beliefs in order to gain his love, thus leaving only her father's resistance to be overcome. She writes: 'J'ai le devoir de comprendre et de servir Dieu selon les vues de l'homme à qui je consacrerai volontairement ma vie tout entière' (p. 230). The favourable resolution of the plot on the marriage of the two lovers, whom paternal and religious authority had tried to separate, is only possible as a result of Lucie's acceptance that a wife cannot be under the authority of both a confessor and a husband. As her resistance provoked the epistolary narrative, so her compliance, her adoption of an object role, makes third-person, authoritative narrative possible.

In the same way as the silencing of Fernande (and to a lesser extent of Clémence) functioned in *Jacques* to assure the narrative unity of the text, so too in *Mademoiselle la Quintinie* the female protagonist's alignment with the 'correct' ideological position allows for the entry of the authoritative narrator. At the same time, Lucie is effectively excluded from the debate about her future, which is now carried on between three men and also assumes a more public and universal import. As Lucie is effectively silenced, so Émile is distanced from events, and it is the third-person narrator who assumes the direction of this 'public' storyline. However, not all the issues related to the private storyline have been resolved, for the General still refuses to allow his daughter to marry someone who is not a Catholic, and it is primarily for this reason that Lemontier is summoned by Lucie. Yet this aspect of the story is now given less importance as the narrative focuses on the opposition of the belief systems of Lemontier and Moreali. It is possible to suggest that the change in the form of the novel from epistolary to third-person narrative influences this change in emphasis, and perhaps even brings it about: had Lemontier, Émile and Lucie continued to narrate events through their correspondences, the emphasis might have continued to be on the possibility of future happiness for the couple and on the impact of events on their private world. The third-person narrative, on the other hand, underscores the public and universal import of events and presents them as part of a clash of two doctrines,

at the end of which Moreali recognises that his beliefs were misguided. The transition from epistolary to omniscient narrative is thus motivated by the didactic content of the work, that is, by the need to ensure that the correct interpretation is placed on the events narrated. As Susan Suleiman points out in her study of didactic fictions, 'novels in which the narrator leaves most of the interpretive talk up to the characters have more potential for internal contradiction or for "gaps" in meaning than those in which the narrator himself speaks with the voice of Truth'.<sup>23</sup> At the end of *Mademoiselle la Quintinie*, the authoritative narrator, who constantly interprets the events he relates, ensures that the correct inferences are drawn by the reader.

In *Mademoiselle la Quintinie*, the move from an editor to a narrator as organising force of the novel has the effect of shattering the illusion of objectivity associated with the epistolary form, for in the final third of the novel the narrator's alignment with the beliefs of Émile and his father is clear. He comments positively on the philosophy which they advocate, and which he describes in these terms:

La moderne philosophie spiritualiste, confuse encore à bien des égards, mais éclairée d'en haut, née du divin principe de la liberté, nourrie de la notion du progrès et en pleine route déjà vers les vastes horizons de l'avenir. (p. 240)

This narrative bias can be seen to affect the presentation of the principal representatives of the two belief systems which clash in the novel: whereas Lemontier is acclaimed as 'cet homme d'une sereine intelligence [. . .] et d'un caractère aussi pur que son esprit' (p. 244), Moreali's mentor, the fanatical priest Onorio, is seen as lacking such purity and openness, and described as speaking in 'sentences obscures et malignes comme celles d'un sphinx' (p. 247). The narrator's commentary on the beliefs of the representatives of the Catholic Church is similarly negative:

Ainsi ces hommes [les prêtres] admettent pour eux une loi de progrès, *comme nous la réclamons* pour les sociétés; mais quel étrange progrès à rebours est le leur! (p. 256, my italics)

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<sup>23</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions. The Ideological Novel As a Literary Genre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 187.



Whilst the content of the novel certainly justifies such descriptions, the narrator's overt bias in this part of the novel is nonetheless worthy of note, for it becomes clear that similar bias has been operative in the epistolary section of the narrative. Godwin-Jones perceptively notes that:

The epistolary form (used in the first two thirds of the novel) is designed to create the impression of objectivity; the characters are presenting their own views not filtered through the narrator. But [. . .] the Catholic viewpoint is hardly given a fair hearing. This is due in part to the juxtaposition of letters. [. . .] The forces of good fight above-board and with the weapons of truth and sincerity; the forces of evil (the Church) use lies and trickery.<sup>24</sup>

As in *Jacques*, the editor assumes an ideological role in the presentation and structuring of the letters in the published correspondence. In this case it is the juxtaposition of letters from Moreali to Lucie and from Émile to his father which underlines the oppositions of honesty and openness vs. deceit and furtive behaviour. Although these oppositions derive from the content of the letters, the editor highlights them in a narrative structure which alternates between correspondences, and gives a clear indication to the reader as to which side his/her sympathies should lie with.

However, narrative partiality goes further in this part of the novel. In the epistolary section, there is a certain ambiguity about the central conflict in the Lucie-Émile relationship, for the debate revolves around both Lucie's Catholic beliefs and the authority of husband over wife. Émile is called upon by his father to fight for what he believes in and to act according to masculine values: 'sois eunuque et engraisse, ou sois homme et lutte' (p. 70). Later in the same letter Lemontier writes:

Tu lutteras sans défaillance pour arracher celle que tu aimes au royaume des ténèbres, [. . .] tu exerceras ta force dans une entreprise sérieuse et passionnée, et, si tu succombes [. . .] tu n'auras pas versé les larmes de l'eunuque; la souffrance t'aura grandi, tu seras un homme! (p. 71)

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<sup>24</sup> Godwin-Jones, *Romantic Vision*, p. 273.

From the very beginning, Émile voices his desire to conform to this gender code and promises: 'ton enfant tâchera d'être un homme' (p. 1). The prevalence of this ideology in the Lemontiers' letters adds an important dimension to what is presented as their fight against the Catholic Church. The principal point of contention between Lucie and Émile is her desire to retain a confessor whose role is presented as a threat to the husband's role in the family. Lemontier warns his son: 'Epoux et père, il [le prêtre] te disputera la confiance de ta femme et le respect de tes enfants' (p. 69). Émile similarly presents his refusal to allow his wife a confessor as having been influenced by his views on the proper relations between husband and wife, rather than based on points of religious principle. This is evidenced in the following remarks to Lucie:

Je suis un homme, et je ne puis supporter un autre homme que moi auprès de vous! (p. 138)

Oui, maudit soit le prêtre, qui ne nous marie que pour nous démarier au plus vite, lui qui a déjà prélevé ses droits sur la virginité de l'esprit et la pureté de l'imagination de nos femmes en leur apprenant *ce que nous seuls eussions dû leur apprendre*. (p. 140, my italics)

The question of what baggage Lucie, as a woman, may bring into marriage with her is clearly posed here, and Émile stresses his belief that she is meant to belong entirely to her future husband, and be subject to no other influences than his. The content of the epistolary section of the novel thus reveals that the position of Émile and his father is more than simply an anti-Catholic one, for the central issue of this part of the novel can be seen as the importance of a wife's submission to her husband's authority.

A further aspect of male authority is evident in an exchange between Émile and Lucie, for although, unlike Jacques, Émile appears to relate to Lucie on an intellectual level, there is one important occasion when it becomes clear that although he discusses religious values and social principles with her, he has not taken on board in any way what she has been saying, and automatically places himself in the position of the one who holds the truth. In order to reconcile her Catholic beliefs and his *philosophe* principles within the relationship, there will have to be a compromise, but Émile

assumes that this will come from Lucie. When they discuss the problems of overcoming her father's resistance to the marriage, this difference in perspective is highlighted by their use of different vocabulary:

[Émile] - Si vous m'aimez assez pour *embrasser mes idées*, vous userez de votre légitime ascendant sur lui pour l'amener à approuver notre union.  
[Lucie] - Ah! oui; mais nous sommes dans une impasse. Pour que *nos idées arrivent à se fondre*, il ne faut pas qu'on nous sépare. (pp. 144-45, my italics)

Émile works on the assumption that Lucie will accept his ideas, whereas she speaks in terms of a reconciling of their ideas. Control rather than exchange is the fitting concept to describe relations in this novel, since Émile's desire for control is further revealed by his use of the word 'posséder' (p. 152) in connection with Lucie, which links him with one of his adversaries, the Général la Quintinie. The latter's opinions are presented negatively in the novel, but he too refers to Lucie as a possession: at one point he says of Lucie, 'ma fille est ma chose' (p. 214), and later sees Émile as wanting to 'obtenir' Lucie (p. 259). The association established between the ways in which two characters who are so ideologically opposed on other issues relate to Lucie underlines their common adherence to the patriarchal conception of woman as object.

This issue of the authority of the male is not however addressed by the narrator. It is true that with Lucie's acceptance of her husband's authority, the gender conflict ceases to be an issue, but it is nonetheless surprising that the narrator does not comment on this sudden abnegation of a right to independence which Lucie had previously so vigorously defended. It is perhaps all the more surprising as shortly before writing her letter to M. Lemontier, Lucie had said to the men discussing her fate: 'je me refuse jusqu'à nouvel ordre à laisser dire le dernier mot de la situation' (p. 217). Having asserted her own right to choose and decide, her renunciation of this right is almost completely unexpected. The narrator's lack of commentary on this subject leads one to suppose that for him Lucie's behaviour was entirely natural. This interpretation is given added weight when one considers that the novel closes on the image of Lucie as mother, and the narrator refers to '[son] effroi de la soutane, [son]

immense besoin d'aimer exclusivement l'époux qui seul pouvait et devait connaître les forces et les délicatesses de son amour' (p. 346). Moreover, the shift away from the epistolary narrative deprives us of both Lemontier and Émile's reactions to Lucie's submission, which would potentially have been interesting given their evident concern that the husband's authority in a marriage be respected. The issue of Lucie's submission, and hence of male control, is effectively buried in a narrative which instead focuses on the religious aspect to the conflict. Not only does this have the effect of downplaying the importance of the gender issue and placing anti-Catholic concerns at the heart of the novel, but by not problematising Lucie's behaviour it also presents women's deference to men as entirely natural.

Both *Jacques* and *Mademoiselle la Quintinie* thus uncover the role of the editor/narrator in the structuring of the novel, and hence in the construction of meaning. However, in the third of these epistolary novels, the role of the editor is less marked, for in *Monsieur Sylvestre*, the focus is on Pierre Sorède who is the author of most of the letters in the published text. Given that this is an almost entirely univocal narrative, it is, from the perspective of this chapter, the least interesting of the epistolary novels. Insofar as it focuses on the voice of one man, it fits better with the first-person narratives studied in Part One and indeed repeats some of the characteristics of these texts. One of the interesting features of this novel is the link established between experiences on a private level and the philosophical content of the narrative (a link which will be explored in greater detail in *Isidora*). Pierre is undertaking the writing of a treatise on happiness, and his letters to his friend Philippe record not only the events of his life, but also some of his philosophical reflections. With Monsieur Sylvestre, a hermit who lives nearby, Pierre debates whether one can experience happiness as an individual or whether it is dependent on society. However, in the course of the novel, these philosophical considerations are accorded lesser importance as love becomes central. Indeed, as Pierre falls in love with Mlle Vallier, happiness becomes equated with love when he writes 'heureux ceux qui peuvent aimer' (p. 269), and is then even surpassed by love:

Qu'importe, d'ailleurs, que l'amour soit ou ne soit pas le bonheur? Il est le but réel de l'homme, et, si le bonheur n'est qu'un but imaginaire, il est bien facile de s'en passer quand on a une réalité si palpitante et si enivrante à saisir! (p. 284)

Finally, Pierre concludes that absolute happiness does not exist and that what is paramount is love:

Le bonheur n'a jamais été défini et ne pourra jamais l'être. Chaque homme s'en fait une idée qui lui est propre [. . .]. Il ne s'agit donc pas de poursuivre le bonheur, mais de développer la vie, qui nous le donne [. . .]. Et je pourrai bien ajouter que, pour la jeunesse, le véritable et le plus bel emploi de la vie, c'est l'amour. (pp. 312-13)

The link between the philosophical and the emotional is strongly marked in this novel. Whereas Mlle Vallier is all but excluded from active participation in the philosophical debate (she intervenes only once to reject happiness as an unattainable ideal and to suggest that instead of striving for the impossible, one should be happy with one's lot in life), as the desired female object she becomes the inspiration for his serious reflections. She fulfils the role of Muse, and the male assumes the authority to draw conclusions of universal relevance and importance from his own experiences. The philosophical views expressed in the novel are thus seen to be built on the private, but at the same time to exclude it.

That philosophical debate is a masculine enterprise is further highlighted by the fact that in *Monsieur Sylvestre*, as in the other epistolary novels, it is carried on between a father and son couple. In this case, although Monsieur Sylvestre is accorded respect and authority for his opinions, Sylvestre considers Pierre to be less enthusiastic and hence older than him, and refers to him as 'mon papa',<sup>25</sup> whilst Pierre calls Sylvestre either 'mon petit' (ibid.) or 'mon fils' (p. 95). Jacques assumes the authority of a father, with Sylvia as a substitute 'son', whom he has educated and to whom he relates as an intellectual equal, while Émile accords his father complete authority and writes to him: 'tu es absolu dans le vrai' (p. 73). However Lucie, although clearly

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<sup>25</sup> George Sand, *Monsieur Sylvestre* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1980) p. 87. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.

capable of intellectual debate (her meeting with Émile at the Cascade de Coux reveals that she has read his father's work and is interested in discussing it), is seen as an object of desire rather than as an intellectual equal. Absolute Truth is portrayed as being in the hands of men, and in each of these three novels dominated by masculine, intellectual considerations, private and feminine concerns are marginalised. This hegemony of the male voice minimises the dialogic potential of these novels and places them under the Law of the Father. However, when the dialogic is given greater play and the centrality of male desire is displaced in polyphonic novels such as *Lélia*, the structured and unified narrative is shattered, and the Law of the Father challenged.

(ii) *Narrative Fragmentation and the Unchained Gazelle: 'Lélia', 'Isidora' and 'La Filleule'*

When *Lélia* was first published in 1833, critics were surprised by the extent to which this novel diverged from the realism and the narrative unity of Sand's previous novels, *Indiana* and *Valentine*. Both Sainte-Beuve and Musset, for instance, commented on the unconventionality of the narrative form,<sup>26</sup> and *L'Europe littéraire* criticised the 'violence'<sup>27</sup> of the style. Although Anna Szabó classifies *Lélia* under 'le schéma bien connu du roman épistolaire',<sup>28</sup> the novel resists such reduction for it lacks the structure of the epistolary text, and Isabelle Naginski captures better the narrative complexity of *Lélia* when she describes it as:

A text predominantly shaped into dialogues, monologues, epistolary missives, confessions, poetic outbursts, philosophical statements, with a minimum of third-person narrative control. Sand's here-to-fore familiar (male) narrator [. . .] has disappeared in *Lélia*, and is not replaced by a

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<sup>26</sup> See Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for her Life*, pp. 107-14.

<sup>27</sup> *L'Europe littéraire*, 22nd August 1833, cited by Irène Johnson, 'Effets de mobilité et paradoxe dans *Lélia*', in *George Sand et l'écriture du roman: Actes du XI<sup>e</sup> colloque international George Sand*, ed. by Jeanne Goldin (Montreal: Paragraphes, 1996), pp. 209-18 (p. 209).

<sup>28</sup> Szabó, *Le Personnage sandien*, p. 38.



unique, dominant, controlling narrative voice. The reader is hard pressed to identify the novel's major narrator.<sup>29</sup>

Naginski concludes that the novel's formal strategies represent an attempt on Sand's part to 'articulate a new kind of prose' (p. 107), but she also sees *Lélia* as being in some ways as a failure, since, 'for all its innovative and experimental writing, [. . .] *Lélia* did not open permanent, new narrative paths for Sand to follow in subsequent works' (p. 137). Whilst *Lélia* was not to have a significant impact on the formal structures of Sand's subsequent novels, there is nonetheless a small number of other, similarly polyphonic narratives, particularly *Isidora* (1846) and *La Filleule* (1853), which share this fragmented, non-unified narrative structure. Although *Adriani* (1854) might also be considered as belonging in this category since it is also composed of a mix of letters, journal entries and third-person narrative, the linearity of its plot is nonetheless preserved, and the ellipses characteristic of these other novels are lacking, thus giving a greater sense of unity and narrative control. Unlike the other three novels, its central character is also male, and it is this difference which may be seen to signify, for in *Lélia*, *Isidora* and *La Filleule* the central character is not only female, but also a figure who subverts the conventional categories of passive, non-desiring femininity.

My analysis of Sand's male-voiced and epistolary narratives has revealed the extent to which many of her male characters and narrators seek to reduce women to the status of silent, submissive objects, enclosed within the heterosexual couple. In her analysis of Stendhal's fragmented and unfinished novel, *Lamiel*, Naomi Schor argues that this text testifies to 'the fundamental impossibility of representing [. . .] a mobile, fully empowered female protagonist within the limits of realism, at least in its French modality'.<sup>30</sup> What Schor has called the 'binding of female energy' (ibid.) appears in these novels to be the precondition for both narrative coherence and social stability. It is therefore surely no coincidence that in those novels where female energy is not

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<sup>29</sup> Naginski, *George Sand: Writing for her Life*, p. 124.

<sup>30</sup> Naomi Schor, *Breaking the Chain: Women, Theory and French Realist Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 142.

bound in this way, narrative coherence is undermined. Indeed, Schor reaches the following conclusion on *Lamiel*: 'unchain the gazelle and let her roam free and the nineteenth-century French novel collapses' (ibid.). It is through this posited link between the unbound heroine and narrative form that I wish to consider Sand's fragmented, polyphonic novels, concentrating both on what they reveal about literary representation and on how their exceptional heroines challenge the dominant patriarchal order.

Both the 1833 and 1839 editions of *Lélia*, are composed of an amalgam of dialogue, letters, monologues and occasional passages of third-person narrative, and in both it is only in the concluding parts that the third-person narrator takes over the telling of the story. Despite these parallels, there are clear differences between the heroines of the two versions of the novel: in the 1839 rewrite *Lélia* has evolved to become more self-aware than in 1833, and more outspoken against patriarchal society. It is for this reason that I shall be concentrating my analysis principally on the 1839 edition of the novel.

Although *Lélia*, unlike *Lamiel*, is a completed text (Schor in fact argues that Stendhal's novel could never have been completed, for the character of the female protagonist makes closure impossible), *Lélia* shares with *Lamiel* the qualities of an unchained gazelle, given that she too is a mobile and strong woman who refuses to be fixed as the object of male desire. *Lélia* is not physically contained like other heroines (she is attached to no man, and for much of the novel appears to belong nowhere), but is depicted in a variety of locations, many of which are open, natural spaces. Sténio, *Lélia*'s frustrated lover, marvels at this mobility when he leads her to an area of unspoilt natural beauty, apparently to try to reawaken her will to live and hence, in his terms, her will to love:

Je vous ai amenée dans cette vallée déserte que le pied des troupeaux ne foule jamais, que la sandale du chasseur n'a point souillée. Je vous y ai conduite, *Lélia*, à travers les précipices. Vous avez affronté sans peur tous les dangers de ce voyage, vous avez mesuré d'un tranquille regard les crevasses qui sillonnent les flancs profonds du glacier, vous les avez

franchies sur une planche jetée par nos guides et qui tremblait sur des abîmes sans fond. Vous avez traversé les cataractes, légère et agile comme la cigogne blanche qui se pose de pierre en pierre, et s'endort le cou plié, le corps en équilibre, sur une de ses jambes frêles, au milieu du flot qui fume et tournoie, au-dessus des gouffres qui vomissent l'écume à pleins bords.<sup>31</sup>

However, it is this same mobility which also frightens Sténio, for Lélia refuses to fix her identity, and in the novel there is a network of immaterial, intangible images which portrays Lélia as mobile, fluid, resistant to any fixity of meaning. At the ball given by the musician Spuela, her actions are described thus: 'Elle venait y chercher un spectacle, elle venait y rêver, solitaire au milieu de la foule. Il avait bien fallu que la foule s'habitue à la voir *planer* sur elle' (I, 90; my italics). This idea of Lélia as mobile and somehow floating above reality is carried over into descriptions of her body and her clothes. On her first visit to the convent, she is described as having '[des] cheveux flottants' (II, 19), and in the 1833 edition Magnus characterises her by her 'robe flottante' (II, 163, note 35). These immaterial and unfixed qualities soon lead Sténio to regard Lélia as having ghostly characteristics for, having seen her as 'un fantôme d'amour' (II, 115), he then asks: 'Où a fui votre spectre léger, dans quel éther insaisissable s'est évanouie votre essence immatérielle?' (II, 116). Later, when he sees her in her convent room, he wonders whether she is real or whether she is a ghost, the latter impression reinforced by the way she dresses:

Elle était tout enveloppée de ses voiles blancs, dont la fraîcheur était incomparable [. . .] et l'éclat de ce vêtement sans tache et sans pli avait quelque chose de fantastique qui lui donnait l'idée d'une existence immatérielle, d'une sérénité en dehors des lois du possible. (II, 130)

The image of the ghost is revealing, for it is, as the narrator stresses, something fantastic, intangible and significantly 'en dehors des lois du possible'. The image of Lélia in her fluidity also falls outside the laws of representation, which construct women's identities around the body, that is, their materiality. Because Lélia effectively denies her body, for reasons which I shall consider later, she cannot be

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<sup>31</sup> George Sand, *Lélia*, 2 vols (Meylan: Éditions de l'Aurore, 1987), I, 128. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.

defined in these terms. Lélia thus becomes something of a floating signifier in the novel, and Isabelle Naginski describes her as 'un personnage fluide'.<sup>32</sup> Irène Johnson also notes that 'sans lieu, mobile, Lélia est un personnage ambigu, paradoxal'.<sup>33</sup>

As a result of Lélia's fluid identity, the framework of female doubles, which had operated in both *Indiana* and *Valentine* as a means of defining, and hence of fixing femininity, is subverted in *Lélia*. In Sténio's eyes, Lélia appears initially to combine within herself both the spiritual and the sensual, which in previous novels served to define different women. His first question to her reveals his inability to understand the mix of opposing characteristics which she embodies: 'Qui es-tu? et pourquoi ton amour fait-il tant de mal? Il doit y avoir en toi quelque affreux mystère inconnu aux hommes. [. . .] Tu es un ange ou un démon, mais tu n'es pas une créature humaine' (I, 61). In his second letter to Lélia, this view of her as double is given even greater prominence: 'Comment accorder ce mélange de foi sublime et d'impiété endurcie, ces élans vers le ciel, et ce pacte avec l'enfer? Encore une fois, d'où venez-vous, Lélia? Quelle mission de salut ou de vengeance accomplissez-vous sur la terre?' (I, 62). The concluding sentence of this letter reaffirms his inability to define her essence by situating her on one side of the angel/demon paradigm, for he cannot decide whether she is 'une puissance évoquée du sein de l'abîme' or 'une révélation envoyée du ciel' (II, 65). This sows confusion in the mind of the young poet, for here the spiritual and physical are not separated, but joined together in one woman who as a result is portrayed as monstrous. Later in the novel, the introduction of the courtesan Pulchérie allows Sténio to attempt to exteriorise the angel/demon opposition which he sees within Lélia. If Pulchérie represents the sensual, physical side to female nature, Lélia represents the abnegation of the body, a denial of the physical. But after the episode in the *pavillon d'Aphrodise* at the end of the third part of the novel, this hierarchy between the ideal and the physical woman is undermined when it is revealed that Sténio has spent the night not with Lélia, but with Pulchérie. The blurring of the

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<sup>32</sup> Isabelle H. Naginski, 'Les deux *Lélia*: une réécriture exemplaire', *Revue des sciences humaines*, 226 (1992), 65-84 (p. 73).

<sup>33</sup> Johnson, 'Effets de mobilité et de paradoxe dans *Lélia*', p. 219.

identities of these two women further destabilises the binary structure through which Sténio seeks to define femininity.

It is his inability to define Lélia which leads Sténio to problematise the heroine's sexual identity. At the beginning of the novel he is perturbed that she does not fit into the mould of the loving woman, and writes to her: 'J'en suis à ne pas savoir si vous êtes capable d'aimer un homme, et [...] je crois que *non!*' (I, 67; italics in original). Lélia falls outside the bounds of what he can imagine, that is, she is a woman who does not conform to traditional feminine qualities centred around love. She is also a woman who exhibits masculine qualities: throughout the novel there are references to Lélia's spiritual nature, her cold reason, her power, her mobility, all of which are qualities generally associated with the masculine. Lélia even appears to adopt a male subject position when, in a poem which she has translated and which we assume also expresses some of her own thoughts, she asks of God: 'Pourquoi m'avez-vous fait naître homme, si vous vouliez un peu plus tard me changer en pierre, et me laisser inutile en dehors de la vie?' (I, 126). These words are of particular significance since in the 1833 edition of the novel, the passage read 'naître femme' (I, 222, note 48). Béatrice Didier, in her commentary on the 1833 variant, interprets this change as marking a shift away from Lélia's personal drama in 1833 to that of mankind in 1839. However, the adoption by Lélia of the male subject position is significant in another way, for it infringes the boundaries of sexual difference, the distinction of 'same' and 'other' which for many of Sand's male characters and narrators forms the basis for social order.

If Lélia, in her fluidity, plurality and immateriality, resists definition, the imagery of the rock and of coldness that circulates in the novel around the character of Lélia reflects a general desire to fix her identity. In the mouths of Sténio, Trenmor, Magnus, Pulchérie and the narrator, these images constantly return to describe and define Lélia. She even refers to herself in similar terms, and it is, of course, this imagery which in the 1833 edition reinforced the idea of the heroine's frigidity. This issue is rather more problematic in the 1839 edition for the causes of Lélia's inability to love are

shown to be social rather than physical or sexual. And yet the images of rock, ice and coldness still pervade the novel. These may be read as a reaction to the fluidity and mobility of the heroine, and hence as replacing what Isabelle Naginski appositely calls 'le regard pétrifiant du narrateur'.<sup>34</sup> These images point up the alterity of the heroine and her non-conformity to the norms of loving, passive femininity.

Of all the characters, it is undoubtedly Sténio who speaks the most frequently of Lélia's coldness, and who links her to marble or to ice. In the letters which open the novel, he refers to her as 'muette et glacée' (I, 63) and as 'pâle comme une des statues de marbre blanc qui veillent auprès des tombeaux' (I, 64). Although he wonders at one point whether her soul 'est de feu ou de glace' (I, 66), it is coldness which comes to characterise her later in the novel when he writes: 'Votre main est aussi froide que le marbre d'où vous sortez' (I, 91). One can easily cite similar examples from the other characters: Trenmor refers to Lélia's 'haleine glacée' (I, 94); Magnus speaks of her 'froide main' and 'le regard méchant et froid de Lélia' (I, 113); Pulchérie describes 'cette expression fière et froide de votre visage endormi' (I, 161), which she says gave Lélia a somewhat masculine air when she was younger; and the narrator too refers to the coldness of her body, her 'lèvres froides' for example (I, 120). Lélia herself analyses the coldness of her nature, 'ce marbre qui [. . .] me monte jusqu'aux genoux' (I, 146; italics in original), and also describes the coldness and hardness of her heart: 'O mon poète! [Sténio] je t'ensevelirai dans un tombeau digne de toi, dans un tombeau plus froid que le marbre, plus impénétrable que l'airain, plus caché que le diamant dans la pierre. Je t'ensevelirai dans mon cœur!' (II, 9). Despite the frequency with which this same image reappears in the discourses of various characters, it would be erroneous to assume that each of the speakers uses it to express a uniform perception of the heroine. Whilst for Pulchérie the cold expression on Lélia's face is to be seen as masculine and attractive, for Trenmor, her coldness is indicative of her social exclusion, her death to the world. It is, however, the perceptions of Sténio and Magnus which offer the greatest contrast.

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<sup>34</sup> Naginski, 'Les deux Lélia: une réécriture exemplaire', p. 73.



What Sténio seems to see in Lélia when he refers to her as cold and made of rock, is a lack of emotion, a heartlessness which for him is uncharacteristic of women. Not only is Lélia unresponsive to his desires, but she does not seem capable of love, and this is what Sténio cannot accept: 'Je ne puis me décider à croire que tant d'amour et de poésie émane de vous sans que votre âme en recèle le foyer' (I, 69). He wants to define Lélia around the concept of love, since for him this represents the essence of femininity. There is an interesting episode in chapter XXVI entitled 'Viola' (I, 123-24), in which the tomb of a woman who died of love provides the backdrop for a discussion between Sténio and Lélia. What Lélia sees as 'le tombeau d'une femme morte d'amour et de douleur', Sténio describes as 'un monument plein de religion et de poésie' (I, 123). He sees Viola as the very epitome of womanhood, and even calls on her to 'cure' Lélia's perceived inability to love:

Viola! s'il y a quelque émanation de vous dans ces fleurs [. . .] ne pouvez-vous pénétrer jusqu'au cœur de Lélia? Ne pouvez-vous embraser l'air qu'elle respire et faire qu'elle ne soit plus là, pâle, froide et morte, comme ces statues qui se regardent d'un air mélancolique dans le ruisseau? (I, 123)

Viola, in her tomb of marble, can be defined by Sténio, and fits into a recognisably feminine type of behaviour (the woman whose life is equated with love). Lélia cannot be typified in this way, and indeed she rejects identification with Viola:

Vivre d'amour et en mourir! c'est beau pour une femme! [. . .] Vous [Viola] n'êtes pas venue au bord de cette onde chanter des hymnes mélancoliques, comme fait Sténio les jours où je l'afflige; vous n'avez pas été vous prosterner dans les temples, comme fait Magnus quand le démon du désespoir est en lui; vous n'avez pas, comme Trenmor, écrasé votre sensibilité sous la méditation [. . .] et vous n'avez pas non plus, comme Lélia... (I, 124)

By opposing Viola's behaviour to that of the three men, and by placing herself on the male side of the opposition, Lélia continues to resist attempts to reduce her to the position of female object. Here she also refuses the petrifying gaze of Sténio which would like to enclose her in a conception of femininity in the same way that Viola is immured in her tomb. Sténio, of course, compares Lélia to one of the statues on the

tomb, but would like to change her from being fixed in this way as unresponsive to his desires (and hence seemingly unable to love), to define her instead by love. Viola, who represents for him the true woman, is thus exhorted to 'embraser' this cold statue. Yet for Lélia, the tomb and the woman inside represent not the ideal of womanhood, but a potent symbol of the petrification that an acceptance of femininity would entail for her as she would become immured in her body like a tomb.

Alongside Sténio's view of Lélia as unloving and unable to love, there exists a view of Lélia as the sensual, physical temptress. For Magnus, Lélia is the beautiful woman who awakens his senses and places his faith in doubt. Woman as temptress, following in the Biblical tradition of Eve, is evoked clearly when Magnus describes how the image of Lélia haunted him:

A peine avais-je commencé ma dernière oraison, qu'elle surgissait tout à coup devant moi, et posait sa *froide* main sur mon épaule en disant: Me voici! Alors il fallait soulever mes paupières appesanties, et lutter de nouveau avec mon cœur troublé, et redire l'exorcisme jusqu'à ce que le *fantôme* fut dissipé. Parfois même il se couchait sur mon lit [. . .] et quand j'entrouvrais les rideaux de serge pour m'approcher de ma couche, je le trouvais là qui me tendait les bras et qui riait de mon épouvante! O mon Dieu! que j'ai souffert! O femme, ô rêve, ô désir! que tu m'as fait de mal! (I, 113; my italics)

Although the imagery of coldness and ghostliness is present in this description, Magnus's view of Lélia differs from that of Sténio, in that for him she also becomes associated with fire and the devil. Convinced that she is dead, he asks Sténio: 'Avez-vous vu sortir son âme maudite, sombre et livide, avec des ailes de feu et des ongles ensanglantés?' (I, 107). This contrast of cold and fire is particularly evident in the 1833 version of the novel, when Magnus's prayers evoke his battle between the physical and the spiritual:

Invoquons l'ange gardien [. . .] Prions-le d'allumer en nous *le feu* des saints désirs et d'éteindre *l'ardeur cuisante des désirs coupables*. Qu'il donne au front de nos madones un aspect plus sévère; au marbre de leurs pieds *un froid plus sensible*, afin qu'en regardant ces traits augustes, en baisant ces pieds sans tache, nous n'ayons pas de pensée impure ou d'illusion funeste. Prions-le aussi, quand il apparaît dans nos songes, de

ne pas prendre les traits délicats, le regard tendre, la robe flottante et les longs cheveux d'une femme. (II, 163, note 35; my italics)

The images of coldness which he invokes here are a means of combating or denying passionate desires. This woman, whose physicality troubles Magnus, is a temptation which as a Catholic priest he must overcome. He must affirm his faith by replacing physical passion with religious passion. But Magnus is incapable of doing this, and even social exclusion cannot extinguish the physical desires he feels. The only solution remaining then is to eliminate the object of his desires, and in both versions of the novel, this is what he does. The version of 1833 is more explicit on this subject than that of 1839, for in the first edition of the novel, Magnus physically kills Lélia. Beside Sténio's corpse, he is unable to persuade Lélia to love him, and so he kills her. Unable to gain power over her by the spoken word, he resorts to violence as a manifestation of his power. Isabelle Naginski reads this murder as constituting an attack on the speaking woman: 'c'est l'ordre établi, représenté par un homme d'église, qui interdit à la parole au féminin de se poser comme sujet autonome'.<sup>35</sup> This is certainly an important element of Lélia's death, and it links to the ending of 1839 in which the established order (aided by Magnus) punishes Lélia's outspokenness and non-conformity as Abbess of the Camaldules by exiling her in an isolated charterhouse. However, in the 1833 edition we can see that Magnus's murder of Lélia is also a reaction against the physical woman:

Il prononçait des formules d'exorcisme et, s'étonnant qu'elle ne disparût pas, il devint entièrement fou et ne songea plus qu'à la tuer, comme autrefois il en avait eu souvent l'idée.

«Oui, oui, s'écria-t-il, quand tu seras morte, je ne te craindrai plus! Je t'oublierai et je pourrai prier.»

Il l'étrangla. (II, 181-82, note 185)

Since Lélia's physical presence resists his attempts at exorcism, he eliminates the body by strangling her. The fact that he does this with his rosary exemplifies the battle between Christianity and physical, even sexual desires that takes place within Magnus and which is acted out in his hallucinations concerning Lélia. Although Magnus may

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<sup>35</sup> Naginski, 'Les deux *Lélia*: une réécriture exemplaire', p. 68.

be mad, and as a result what he says should perhaps be discounted, it is clear that his perception of *Lélia* is nonetheless established according to the same criteria as Sténio's, and that each projects his desires or fantasms onto the woman.

Since traditional definitions of femininity have no purchase on *Lélia*, since she resists being fixed by the male gaze, such contradictory images can flourish. As no unified vision of the heroine exists, and as *Lélia* in her fluidity and etheriality resists definition, the conditions for third-person narrative are undermined. The nature of the heroine may in fact be seen as the source of the polyphony in the novel because of the multiple perceptions of her character which proliferate in the absence of a single, absolute vision of her. And this situation is further complicated by the fact that *Lélia* herself lays claim to the logos and adopts the position of speaking subject. In so doing, she adds to the confusion of discourses which surround her by giving her own view of her character and explaining her inability to love. In the 1833 edition of the novel *Lélia* described her incapacity to love as a physical problem which she herself related to her adolescence when, 'le sang fatigué par l'immobilité de l'étude, je ne sentis point la jeunesse enfoncer ses aiguillons dans mon chair', the result of which was 'un divorce complet [. . .] entre le corps et l'esprit' (I, 226, note 6) and 'la froideur de [s]es sens' (I, 227, note 7). However, in the 1839 edition these references to the heroine's frigidity are missing. One may suspect that Sand was exercising a form of self-censorship by removing those passages which were most daring under the pen of a female author, and which had most shocked the public and critics in the first version. However, the effects of this editing are significant, since by relying only on the 1839 text of *Lélia* it is no longer possible to speak with authority of the heroine's frigidity. Indeed, the causes of her inability to love in this second version are no longer personal and physical, but socially conditioned.

In the 1839 confession scene with Pulchérie *Lélia* speaks of her experiences in love, but this time the emphasis is placed on the inability of the two sexes to love each other as equals. She admits to her great need to love, and tells how when she first loved, she did so valiantly: 'Femme, je n'avais qu'une destinée noble sur la terre, c'était

d'aimer. *J'aimai vaillamment*' (I, 167; italics in original). But the man she loved turned out to be unworthy of her love, and sought to dominate her in the relationship:

Et puis un jour vint où, furieux de se sentir plus petit que moi, il tourna sa colère contre ma race, et maudit mon sexe entier pour avoir le droit de me maudire. Il me reprocha les défauts que nous contractons dans l'esclavage, l'absence des lumières qu'on nous refuse et des passions qu'on nous défend. Il me reprocha jusqu'à l'immensité de mon amour, comme une ambition insensée, comme un dérèglement de l'intelligence, comme un appétit de domination. Et, quand il eut proféré ce blasphème, je sentis enfin que je ne l'aimais plus. (I, 174)

Despite an evident desire for emotional fulfilment, she is unable to accept the dynamics of power which underly the love relationship in a patriarchal society. It is a feeling which she will also experience with Sténio:

Il [Sténio] maîtrisa la femme à son tour, il l'étreignit dans ses bras, il colla sa bouche à cette bouche pâle et froide dont le contact l'étonnait encore... Mais Lélia, le repoussant tout à coup, lui dit d'une voix sèche et dure: «Laissez-moi, je ne vous aime plus!» (I, 121)

This reaction is not simply attributable to the heroine's supposed frigidity, as she explains:

Je t'aimais tant tout à l'heure, alors que, peureux et naïf, tu recevais mes baisers presque malgré toi! [. . .] Tu étais si humble alors! Reste ainsi, c'est ainsi que je t'aime. [. . .] Mais quand tu t'enhardis, quand tu demandes plus qu'il n'est en moi d'oser, je perds l'espoir, je m'effraie d'aimer et de vivre. Je souffre et je regrette de m'être abusée une fois de plus. (I, 121-22)

The narrator interprets this scene as an expression of Lélia's inability to love and comments that her heart was doubtless 'moins ardent que son cerveau' (I, 122).

However, what Lélia herself says seems to imply that is rather her head, her knowledge of what a love relationship in patriarchal society entails, that prevents her from loving. What she wants is a relationship where she will not be reduced to the role of sexual object, one in which her sensual, emotional and spiritual needs can be met, and she is unable to believe that this is possible in patriarchal society. Although Sténio professes to love her for both her mind and her body, she sees in him someone



who wants to dominate her, and, after the events of the *pavillon d'Aphrodise*, as someone who values physical love over spiritual love. Lélia thus becomes a victim not of her body, but of society: no personal deficiency is at the root of her inability to love, rather it has been caused by a man and by the structure of patriarchal society.

This difference between the two editions of *Lélia* is important, for by removing the references to frigidity from the later text, it seems to me that Sand was rejecting an aspect of patriarchal thought which she often depicts in her novels: namely the tendency to define women in terms of their body. If in 1833 Lélia's behaviour could be explained in terms of her dysfunctional sexual side, in the 1839 text her problems are not physical, but social. This has not however stopped contemporary critics from using the first edition as the key to the novel. Osten Södergård, having detailed in his study the various instances of the metaphor of coldness, goes no further in his analysis than the following statement:

Si l'on se contente de lire la seconde version de *Lélia*, [. . .] on a nettement [. . .] l'impression d'une froideur qui constitue l'essence même du personnage principal qu'est Lélia et on serait tenté d'épiloguer sur sa véritable signification. [. . .] Or, l'heureux hasard d'une première version non expurgée met à notre disposition les moyens de prouver l'exactitude du raisonnement et pour ainsi dire de boucler la boucle.

Sans cette édition, il manquerait une pièce dans la mosaïque; c'est elle qui nous fournit la preuve. Elle se trouve dans les passages où George Sand avoue et confesse sa frigidity et son impuissance physique.<sup>36</sup>

Södergård next quotes a long passage from the confession scene between Lélia and Pulchérie to prove this point, and the problem is for him then neatly resolved. But not only does this interpretation of the novel exemplify the worst kind of biographical reading, in which the heroine is seen to be the author, and her admission of an incapacity for physical love read as a comment on the author's own love life, it also partakes in a process of defining woman through her body which the transition from the 1833 edition to that of 1839 rejects.

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<sup>36</sup> Osten Södergård, *Essais sur la création littéraire de George Sand d'après un roman remanié: 'Lélia'*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Historia Litterum, I (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1962), pp. 128-29.



Since Lélia is a mobile woman who refuses to be fixed as feminine, and moreover a woman who lays claim to the logos, the narrative coherence of the realist novel which Schor associates with the bound heroine is shattered. However, whilst Lélia never relinquishes this position, in the final part of the novel some of this narrative coherence is re-established and the third-person narrator becomes dominant for the first time. In the 1833 edition of *Lélia*, the third-person narrator takes over after the 'confession' scene between Lélia and Pulchérie, and his narrative is focused on Sténio, his life of debauchery, his time spent in a monastery and his discussions with Magnus on the subject of Lélia. Lélia disappears after the *pavillon d'Aphrodise* episode and reappears only at the end to mourn Sténio's suicide and to be killed in turn by Magnus. A clear link is thus established between the eclipsing and the silencing of the problematic female character and the return to a more omniscient and authoritative narrative mode. In the 1839 version of the novel, on the other hand, Lélia is never displaced as the central character, and her metaphysical and anti-patriarchal monologues form an important part of the closing chapters. Two factors may be seen to underlie the third-person narrative in this edition of the novel: the new emphasis placed on the mysterious person of Trenmor/Valmarina and the socio-political (not to say adventure) storyline that he introduces; and the fact that although Lélia is not silenced, her identity is nevertheless fixed to some extent as feminine since she assumes the role of a nun and thus effectively withdraws from the economy of male desire into which she had refused to be inserted.

In his comments on Lélia's character in this part of the novel, the narrator insists on this idea of exclusion, and reveals a marked tendency to reduce Lélia to one defining characteristic: her marginality to society. He insists for instance on 'la nécessité de son isolement' (II, 59). Whilst in a sense the narrator is correct to say that Lélia cannot exist in society (a fact which she herself ultimately recognises), he fixes permanent, social exclusion as her destiny, whilst Lélia battles for some time with her conflicting feelings of isolation from society and the desire to engage with it. Furthermore, whereas the narrator highlights the idea of exclusion and detachment

from society, Lélia's time in the convent, her positioning on the margins of society, will paradoxically represent perhaps her most complete attempt to engage with society and to change it. His comments on the necessity of her isolation reflect to a large extent the views of a society which marginalises that which is anomalous, and perhaps also point to the importance of this exclusion in creating the conditions for the third-person narrative in the 1839 edition.

Although Lélia becomes to some extent fixed and categorised at the end of the novel when the third-person narrator takes over, it is paradoxically in this section that she is most outspoken. Two related themes emerge from what she says: her desire to change the patriarchal conception of love, and to reformulate the relationship to the other. These are important parts of her vision in 'Lélia au Rocher', which reveals a Lélia who is battling with the doubts and temptations that haunted her in the first three parts, and which remained unresolved in the 1833 version of the novel.

It is Lélia's disgust and anger towards Sténio that motivates what she says in this chapter. Having seen in the young poet the possibility of an ideal, spiritual love, she is disappointed that he fails to live up to this ideal, and that in the *pavillon d'Aphrodise* he reveals his attachment to the pleasures of the flesh. Lélia speaks out on the way love has become devalued in society, and against the hypocrisy of men in exalting a spiritual love whilst desiring woman principally for her body:

Ah! laissez-moi rire de ces poètes [ . . . ] qui comparent leurs sens aux subtiles émanations des fleurs, leurs embrassements aux magnifiques conjonctions des astres! Encore mieux valent ces débauchés sincères qui nous disent tout de suite ce qui doit nous dégoûter d'eux! (II, 11)

Lélia has been disillusioned by a man's love which claims to be that which it is not. What she wants in love is a union of both the physical and the spiritual, a relationship in which she is not reduced to the role of sexual object:

L'être qui aspire à des joies toujours nobles, à des plaisirs toujours vivement et saintement sentis, à une continuelle association de l'amour moral à l'amour physique, est un ambitieux destiné à un bonheur immense

ou à une éternelle douleur. Il n'y a pas de milieu pour ceux qui font un dieu de l'amour. (II, 13)

Lélia feels that there is no possibility for the fulfilment of such a dream in society, and that 'la fille publique est la véritable épouse, la véritable amante des hommes de cette génération; elle est à leur hauteur' (II, 14). She continues to reject the patriarchal conception of love which she sees as privileging the body. Based on her experience, she cannot accept that men will love her for her mind *and* her body. In a sense this indicates a problem on Lélia's part, but it is also part of an intense awareness that in love, in a relationship with a man, she will inevitably be loved not as an intellectual equal, but reduced to the status of receptacle for male desires, and Sténio's comment after the night in the pavillon d'Aphrodise - 'c'est aujourd'hui seulement que j'aime' (I, 197) - seems in her eyes to confirm this.

In this speech, Lélia overcomes her personal disappointment in love, and in dialogue with Trenmor she is able to clarify her feelings. From the defensive remark, 'Lélia n'est pas foudroyée parce qu'un homme l'a maudite' (II, 10), she analyses the causes of her anger, and what had been an inability to love now becomes an active refusal to love under current social conditions. 'Lélia saura sauver Lélia' (II, 8), she proclaims at the beginning of this chapter, and this energy is transformed into action at the end when she takes responsibility for her own destiny. With the reference to Prometheus at the end of Lélia's monologue indicating a will to act to change society, this chapter effects the transformation in Lélia from the 1833 heroine characterised by romantic *ennui*, to an energetic woman 'with a mission'.

Lélia's refusal to love effectively excludes her from society, and it is not therefore surprising that she should isolate herself in the Couvent des Camaldules and reject physical union with men for 'un hymen mystique avec le fils de Dieu' (II, 72). That her disappointment in love, and her tactical refusal to love have influenced her choice of convent life is made clear in her adaptation of Psalm 137, 'Super Flumina Babylonis', which she sings to the assembled congregation after taking the veil. In her adaptation of this Psalm, it becomes one sung specifically by women, for it begins,

'Nous nous sommes assises auprès des fleuves de Babylone', whilst the biblical text has 'assis'. Where in the Psalm, the Jews refused to sing to God in a land devoted to foreign gods because they felt this would constitute a profanation of their religion, Lélia believes that women should refuse men's demands for physical love, thus remaining faithful to their own ideal of love. She explains this idea later to Cardinal Annibal:

Il est un seul moyen de travailler à notre délivrance: c'est de nous renfermer dans une juste fierté; c'est de suspendre, comme les filles de Sion, nos harpes aux saules de Babylone, et de refuser le cantique d'amour aux étrangers nos oppresseurs. Nous vivrons dans le deuil et dans les larmes, il est vrai, nous nous ensevelirons vivantes, nous renoncerons aux saintes joies de la famille aussi bien qu'aux enivresments de la volupté; mais nous garderons la mémoire de Jérusalem, le culte de l'idéal. Par là, nous protesterons contre l'impudeur et la grossièreté du siècle, et nous forcerons ces hommes, bientôt las de leurs abjects plaisirs, à nous faire une place nouvelle à leurs côtés, et à nous apporter en dot la même pureté dans le passé, la même fidélité dans l'avenir qu'ils exigent de nous. (II, 95-96)

Love here becomes like a religion, and ultimately Lélia hopes that women's refusal to love will force men to love them as they want to be loved. It is her position in the convent that will allow her to begin to institute this change.

Lélia's next major account of her feelings comes in the chapter 'Contemplation', in which Lélia is alone in nature, elevated on the summit of a volcano. Here her anger has dissipated, and has been replaced by a more general optimism. This episode functions as a return to the origins of humanity, and provides the heroine with a sense that even if society is corrupt, there is still hope, and that the possibility for doing good still exists. In Isabelle Naginski's reading of the novel, this chapter constitutes the second part of the Prometheus triptych, for here Lélia 'annonce le début d'une nouvelle ère marquée par un utopisme au féminin'.<sup>37</sup> Having succeeded in finding a

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<sup>37</sup> Isabelle H. Naginski, 'Prométhée: George Sand et les mythes', in *Le Chantier de George Sand - George Sand et l'étranger: Actes du X<sup>e</sup> colloque international George Sand*, ed. by Tivadar Gorilovics and Anna Szabó (Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, 1993), pp. 133-43 (p. 139).

'home' for herself in the convent and on the margins of society, and having been appointed abbess, Lélia has a position and the necessary authority which will permit her to work for the transformation of society. This is, I think, an important factor in the atmosphere of hope that characterises this episode. Lélia speaks of the social harmony and fraternity that she wants to create:

Il fallait qu'une femme gravât jusqu'à cette dernière cime [. . .]. Il fallait qu'au haut de cet autel audacieux la pensée humaine [. . .] vînt se poser et replier ses ailes pour se pencher vers la terre et la bénir dans un élan fraternel, créant ainsi, pour la première fois, un rapport sympathique de l'homme à l'homme. (II, 106)

This desire to deliver the world is reminiscent of both Prometheus and of Christ, and Lélia uses the convent as the place from which to effect this change, thus converting it from a place of reclusion and even exile, with no social function. This is certainly how this religious institution was characterised in the 1833 edition of the novel, when Magnus sought isolation from the world in what was an exclusively male order. In 1839 the monastery has become a convent, a feminine space, and during Lélia's time as abbess, it becomes an institution which engages forcefully with society, since Lélia encourages the distribution of the convent's wealth to 'soulager la misère des habitants de la contrée' (II, 155). It is also from the convent that Lélia tries to educate women in order that they might resist the submission to which their ignorance has for so long consigned them. The convent thus becomes a space from which Lélia can begin to realise her feminine vision of the future.

This vision, which is centred around a new equality in love between men and women, is clearly stated in the chapter entitled 'Don Juan'. Although this chapter also appeared in the 1833 edition, the invective against Don Juan was then spoken by Sténio in conversation with Magnus. In the 1839 edition, however, the words are Lélia's, and the context has now become the more public one of the heroine's lectures, which gathered together nuns and women from outside the convent. Although Sand has retained a number of passages from the 1833 edition, the changes in speaker and context alter their import.



In this episode Lélia is provoked to speech by Sténio, who has disguised himself as a woman in order to attend one of her lectures. Jealous of her success, he wants to humiliate and defeat her by arguing against her idea that women should refuse love to those men who do not merit their love. Sténio contends that women who have youth and beauty, two qualities valued by men, can use them to convert men to the Christian ideal. If this involves suffering, he continues, then this will be rewarded in heaven: 'Sans doute, ils nous feront souffrir [. . .]; mais nous souffrirons ces maux en vue de leur salut et du nôtre' (II, 122). After arguing from a religious perspective, Sténio introduces the myth of Don Juan and claims that it is the woman who set out to love and hence to save Don Juan from his life of debauchery who represents the true ideal of womanhood.

Lélia in her reply attacks the cult of Don Juan and the egoism of a man who thinks that the world is simply there to meet his desires and pleasures. She stresses that this myth posits only the male as desiring subject, and that it glorifies women's submission and suffering:

O mes sœurs! ô mes filles! voilà ce que c'est que don Juan. Aimez-le maintenant si vous pouvez. [. . .] Adorez-le à genoux, abjurez pour lui les dons du ciel [. . .]. Allez! courbez vous fronts, quittez le sein de Dieu, jeunes anges qui vivez en lui. Faites-vous victimes, faites-vous esclaves, faites-vous femmes! (II, 125)

The final sentence of this quotation shows the roles that women will continue to be reduced to if they accept the ideal of femininity proposed by the Don Juan myth, for this is its hidden agenda. Continuing from this, Lélia brings out another contradiction in the ideology of the Don Juan myth which attributes to women the ability to save men from their debauchery:

Si, comme les hommes aiment à le proclamer, la femme est un être faible, ignorant et crédule, de quel droit nous appellent-ils pour les convertir? Nous ne le pouvons pas sans doute; et eux, nos supérieurs, nos maîtres, ils peuvent donc nous pervertir et nous perdre? Voyez quelle hypocrisie ou quelle absurdité dans leur raisonnement! (II, 126)



It is in these concluding remarks that Lélia's speech diverges from that of Sténio in 1833, though almost half of what she says is a repetition of passages from the 1833 edition. The copious notes which Béatrice Didier has appended to her edition of the 1839 text show that even in the passages re-used from the first edition there have been a number of alterations. These can generally be classified as stylistic revisions undertaken to tone down Sténio's emphasis on physical love with, for example, the replacement of words like 'caresses' (II, 173, notes 69 and 72) by 'larmes' (II, 123) and 'amour' (II, 124), and the rewriting of 'frémissait sous tes baisers' (II, 173, note 71) to become 'frémissait au bruit de tes pas' (II, 124). Sténio's and Lélia's analysis of Don Juan's egoism and disrespect for women remains however essentially the same, though what was in 1833 a statement of one man's disillusionment in love has become in 1839 an important feminist critique of patriarchal thought and of the reality of the love relationship in patriarchal society. If Sténio's and Lélia's speeches share the following remarks addressed to Don Juan, the conclusions each character reaches are significantly different:

Croyais-tu qu'un jour le délire arracherait aux lèvres de ta victime une promesse impie, et qu'elle s'écrierait: « Je t'aime parce que je souffre [. . .]. Je me dévoue parce que tu me méprises [1839, repousses] [. . .]. » Si tu as nourri un seul instant cette absurde espérance, tu n'étais qu'un fou, ô don Juan! Si tu as cru un seul instant que la femme peut donner à l'homme qu'elle aime autre chose que sa beauté, son amour et sa confiance, tu n'étais qu'un sot. (II, 124)

Sténio's words speak an intense personal disillusionment, for not only has he not found happiness in a debauched existence, but he has also come up against a woman who was not prepared to give in to his desires. Although there is a marked realisation here that women value love more highly than men, and that true love cannot exist amidst debauchery, his comments lack the conclusion that Lélia brings to them in 1839, since she argues that for true love to be possible, women must not be confined to the position of submissive object, deprived of any desires of their own.

For Lélia, women's devotion must have limits, and she encourages her 'sisters' to keep their ideal of love in sight, and to accept nothing less: 'Détournez vos regards, ô

mes douces et chastes compagnes! élevez-les au ciel et voyez si les anges s'ennuient de la société de l'Éternel! voyez si la légende est vraie et si les bienheureux abjurent leurs ineffables délices pour la société des hommes corrompus!' (II, 127). Lélia hopes that if women stay faithful to their ideal and refuse to accept anything less, then men will be forced to change their attitude to love and not expect women continually to submit to their desires. This ideal of love can be compared to what Luce Irigaray describes in *Passions élémentaires*:

L'amour est le moteur du devenir qui laisse l'un et l'autre à leur croissance. Pour un tel amour, il faut que chacun garde son corps autonome. Que l'un ne soit pas source de l'autre, ni l'autre de l'un. Que deux vies s'embrassent et se fécondent l'un l'autre, sans fin arrêtée en l'un ou en l'autre.<sup>38</sup>

What these two women's conceptions of love share, despite the almost century and a half that separate them, is the idea that love must become a relationship between two equals, between two desiring subjects, where both the needs of the man and the woman will be met. The positioning of the man as the only desiring subject who possesses the submissive woman must be overcome in a more sharing relationship. These changes in the private realm would have important consequences on the social level, for they envisage a less hierarchical, less power-based society, and significantly also one in which women would enjoy subject status.

But Lélia's attempts to instigate these changes are thwarted when the Church turns against her. As a result of her refusal to give in to Magnus's desires, he seeks his revenge through the Church by launching accusations about her relations with the Cardinal Annibal and by revealing that after Sténio's suicide she had his body buried in an obscure corner of the convent cemetery. She is also accused of having professed 'des doctrines étranges, nouvelles, pleines de passions mondaines, et toujours imprégnées d'hérésie' (II, 154). Judged guilty and exiled in a remote charterhouse, Lélia dies the following year, though not without having vented her spleen against society and the Church in a final chapter, entitled 'Délire'. Here she

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<sup>38</sup> Luce Irigaray, *Passions élémentaires* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1982), pp. 32-33.

speaks her disappointment with a world that she wanted to help, but which rejected her. After the optimism and solidarity with humanity that she had previously felt, her mood at this point is depressed, alienated:

Il est des heures dans la nuit où je me sens accablée d'une épouvantable douleur. D'abord c'est une tristesse vague, un malaise inexprimable. La nature tout entière pèse sur moi, et je me traîne brisée, fléchissant sous le fardeau de la vie comme un nain qui serait forcé de porter un géant. Dans ces moments-là, j'ai besoin d'expansion, j'ai besoin de soulagement, et je voudrais embrasser l'univers dans une effusion filiale et fraternelle; mais il semble que l'univers me repousse tout à coup, et qu'il se tourne vers moi pour m'écraser. (II, 157)

Having reached out to humanity, she has been rejected by it. Her feelings are overwhelmingly negative and despairing at her powerlessness, at her inability to realise her vision.

If Lélia's hopes are dashed by the actions of the Church, the vision she articulates and tries to put into practice remains important. The 1839 heroine does not just resist patriarchal categorisation, thus creating the conditions for the polyphonic novel. She in fact tries to go beyond this categorisation to offer a different ideology of womanhood in which women would not be defined in relation to men. Towards the end of the 1839 edition of the novel, Lélia lays claim to a position isolated from society in the Couvent des Camaldules, and this marginal position is also equivalent to a reappropriation of the feminine, for the convent is a traditionally feminine space. Gone, however, are the connotations of exclusion and confinement, for the convent becomes a place of self-realisation, and Lélia's role as nun becomes an assertion of difference which sets her apart from patriarchal society and its values, and which allows her to speak out against this society. Her final speeches are not only critical of the patriarchal order, but also concentrate on issues of love and women's identity, which will be important topics in other novels.

If Lélia represents the woman who cannot be enclosed in patriarchal society, Isidora is a woman who has sought integration there. She also functions as the heroine who is to some extent imprisoned in the patriarchal narrative, firstly that of Jacques Laurent

and then that of the third-person narrator, before she frees herself from the male gaze which seeks to define her. As in *Lélia*, the issue of women's identity is central to *Isidora*, for in the first part of the novel the male protagonist, Jacques Laurent, is writing a philosophical treatise in which defining the difference between men and women is shown to be of central importance. The first extract from this incomplete work is precisely concerned with this problem:

*La femme, est-elle ou n'est-elle pas l'égale de l'homme dans les desseins, dans la pensée de Dieu?*

La question est mal posée ainsi; il faudrait dire:

*L'espèce humaine est-elle composée de deux êtres différents, l'homme et la femme? Mais dans cette rédaction j'omets la pensée divine, et ce n'est pas mon intention. En créant l'espèce humaine, Dieu a-t-il formé deux êtres distincts et séparés, l'homme et la femme?*<sup>39</sup>

This question, which he has such difficulty in formulating, is presented as the third in Jacques's philosophical enquiry, and he acknowledges in his journal that he cannot proceed with his treatise until it is resolved:

Elle n'est pas de médiocre importance dans mon livre: régler *les rapports de l'homme et de la femme dans la société, dans la famille, dans la politique!* Je n'irai pas plus avant dans mon traité de philosophie, que je n'aie trouvé une solution aux divers problèmes que cette formule soulève en moi. (p. 41, italics in original)

When, despairing of his current inability to answer this question, he decides to continue with his book, intending to return to this question when all the others have been satisfactorily answered, he discovers that all the issues he broaches return to the question of sexual difference. Having tried to define the role of both men and women in the education of children, he realises that he assumes that only men are capable of imparting knowledge, and he adds:

Cela me fait aussi songer que j'établis *a priori* une distinction arbitraire entre l'éducation des mâles et celle des femelles, presque dès le berceau. Il faudrait commencer par définir la différence intellectuelle et morale de l'homme et de la femme... (p. 44, italics in original)

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<sup>39</sup> George Sand, *Isidora* (Paris: Des femmes, 1990), p. 40, italics in original. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.

The admission of failure comes in his next journal entry: 'Cette difficulté m'a arrêté court; je vois que j'étais fou de vouloir passer à la quatrième question sans avoir résolu la troisième' (ibid.). But what has this third question now become? If we look at the journal entry quoted above, we see that the emphasis has now shifted away from the question of whether woman is different from man to that of defining her 'différence intellectuelle et morale'. The difference that had originally been questioned, is now taken as natural. This shift is confirmed in the next extract from his philosophical writings, which begins: '*Quelles sont les facultés et les appétits qui différencient l'homme et la femme dans l'ordre de la création?*' (p. 47, italics in original). With this distinction established, Jacques soon falls into traditional stereotypes concerning women:

On est convenu de les regarder comme supérieures dans l'ordre des sentiments, et je croirais volontiers qu'elles le sont, ne fût-ce que par le sentiment maternel... O ma mère!...

S'il est vrai qu'elles aient moins d'intelligence et plus de cœur, où est l'infériorité de leur nature? (p. 47)

Women thus become defined by their superiority in the realm of the emotions, and Jacques effectively repeats the opinions of other philosophers whose work he had earlier derided. Referring to their work on women, he writes:

J'admire comme ils l'ont cavalièrement et lestement traitée tous ces auteurs, tous ces utopistes, tous ces métaphysiciens, tous ces poètes! Ils ont toujours placé la femme trop haut ou trop bas. (p. 41)

In his own work and in his life, Jacques Laurent ends up reducing women to the same stereotype of idealised/demonised womanhood. The two female characters present at the beginning of *Isidora* - Isidora and Julie - are perceived through this binary opposition, with Isidora, the courtesan, defined entirely by her physical, sensual side. At the other end of the scale we find Julie, the woman regarded as pure, untainted by the physical, and representing the ideal in love. This opposition is emphasised by the imagery which Jacques Laurent uses to distinguish Julie from Isidora, for whilst the latter is described as 'la rose [. . .] enivrante' (p. 77), the former is the 'camélia blanc, symbole de pureté' (p. 78).

However, Isidora challenges this hierarchy and questions the masculine value system, in which women who have loved are seen as impure, and devalued in relation to 'la vierge qui n'a point aimé encore' (p. 77). She challenges this belief system and urges Jacques to look beyond purity to consider other qualities:

Celles que tu croiras les plus dépravées sont souvent celles qui ont le plus tendre cœur, l'esprit le plus spontané, les plus nobles intelligences, les entrailles les plus maternelles, les dévouements les plus romanesques, les instincts les plus héroïques. Songes-y, malheureux, toutes ces femmes de plaisir et d'ivresse, c'est l'élite des femmes, ce sont les types les plus rares et les plus puissants qui soient sortis des mains de la nature. (p. 78)

Isidora here makes the point that women should not be defined exclusively in terms of their sensuality or their purity, and that if men would only look beyond this distinction, they would find tender-hearted, intelligent women. She also stands patriarchal ideology on its head by claiming that those women who are seen as degraded in society are in fact the elite of women given their ability to love. Since patriarchal society reduces women to the realm of the heart and the emotions, men should value those women who have loved, rather than the woman who has never loved. But so strange are these ideas, and so beguiling her voice, that Jacques Laurent cannot take on board what she says, and at the end of his journal entry he once again evokes the ideal Julie as a source of calm and stability:

Cette femme [Isidora] m'a bouleversé le cerveau. O Julie! j'ai besoin de vous revoir et de vous entendre pour effacer ce mauvais rêve, pour me rattacher à l'adoration fervente et inviolable de la clarté sans ombre et de la pudeur sans trouble. (pp. 79-80)

Resorting to the traditional opposition and hierarchy of the angel and the demon, that Sand presents as a structuring principle of patriarchal thought, Jacques seeks order and security in the presence of the ideal, non-threatening woman. But the two women Jacques Laurent opposes are in fact one, for Julie and Isidora are two roles played by the same woman. Julie represents the private side to Isidora, the courtesan who is described as '*la femme la plus méprisée, sinon la plus méprisable de Paris*' (p. 87, italics in original). The restrictive nature of patriarchal classifications is highlighted by



this collapsing of what was perceived as two women into one, and the binary opposition is hence undermined.

It is of course significant that Jacques's philosophical treatise all but stops when the two women he had structured as polar opposites are revealed to be one and the same. The ideal woman who had inspired him has turned out to be Isidora, the sensual and desiring woman whose ideas had sown doubt in his mind. He records his reaction to this news in his journal: 'Me voilà brisé, anéanti!' (p. 81). What had seemed to be a stable binary opposition has been undermined, and the disappearance of Julie, the passive, non-desiring woman, removes the foundation on which his philosophy was constructed. Although this section of the novel closes with an assurance from Jacques Laurent that 'mon ouvrage est fort avancé, et la question des femmes est à peu près résolue pour moi' (p. 93), the reader has seen little evidence of this in the extracts that have been reproduced. It is also inconsistent with what the editor had said in his introduction, when he referred to 'un ouvrage philosophique que Jacques Laurent n'a pas encore terminé et qu'il ne terminera peut-être jamais' (p. 39). The collapsing of the binary opposition leads to the end of his philosophical inquiry for his whole belief system is shattered when the ideal woman disappears and with her the basis for his definition of womanhood.

If the destabilising of categories of female identity and the substitution of the demon for the angel undermines the philosophical project, it is nonetheless at this point in the novel that the third-person narrative begins. This may be explained by the fact that a new double appears in this part of the novel to fix the identities of the female characters. Isidora is now opposed to Alice, her sister-in-law, thus maintaining the opposition of ideal and demonised woman. This is emphasised by the narrator's naming of the two main female characters. In this part of the novel Isidora is revealed to have married Alice's brother on his death bed, and Alice must therefore decide whether she will honour her dead brother's wishes and publicly accept this woman as her sister-in-law. When she decides to accept and befriend Isidora, this is presented by the narrator as the sinner being saved by the angel (p. 141). Such images are then

used to name the two women, and Alice is referred to as 'la bonne Alice' (p. 139), 'l'angélique sœur qui lui [Isidora] rouvrait le chemin du ciel' (p. 141), 'un ange de miséricorde' (p. 142), 'une sœur de la Charité' (p. 172) and often simply as Alice. However the narrator rarely uses the name Isidora, preferring 'la courtisane' (pp. 139, 141, 144, 171, 172, 183), 'la pécheresse' (p. 140), 'l'archange rebelle' (p. 142) and also occasionally Julie (p. 174). Even though Alice accepts Isidora as her sister, the narrator continues to oppose the two women, despite the fact that Alice has told her family to forget 'ce nom d'Isidora, sous lequel Mme de S... vous est sans doute désavantageusement connue' (p. 104). Indeed, when Alice first calls Isidora her sister-in-law, the narrator expresses Isidora's reaction thus: 'Sa belle-sœur! pensa la courtisane' (p. 144). The use of such a value-laden lexis reveals the masculine perspective of a narrator, who will not allow the angel/demon opposition to collapse. It also reveals the importance of fixing identity for narrative coherence.

The masculine perspective of the narrative is reinforced by the blurring of the distinction between the third- and first-person narrators, for Jacques Laurent and the narrator are shown to share similar ideologies, despite the latter's rather disparaging comments on Jacques Laurent's philosophical scribblings: 'Beaucoup des manuscrits de Jacques Laurent avaient déjà servi à faire des sacs pour le raisin, et c'était peut-être la première fois qu'ils étaient bons à quelque chose' (p. 39). Indeed, every effort is made to separate the two men as narrative figures, since after an initial introduction, the third-person narrator disappears, and the rest of part one of the novel is told in the first person by Jacques Laurent through his journal and his philosophical notebook. The third-person narrative voice returns to take control in part two of the novel, in which apparently none of Jacques's writings is included. Despite the separation of these two figures on the narrative level, there is one important passage in part two when these narrative voices merge. At the end of a long digression on humanity's search for the truth, and how it cannot be found in contemporary society, the narrator suddenly comments:

Mais je m'aperçois que je traduis au lecteur le griffonnage obscur et fragmenté des cahiers que Jacques Laurent entassait à cette époque de sa

vie, dans un coin, et sans les relire ni les coordonner, comme il avait toujours fait. Ses notes et réflexions nous ont paru si confuses et si mystérieuses, que nous avons renoncé à en publier la suite. (p. 127)

Although he tries to reclaim this authority at the end of the above passage by declaring the rest of Jacques Laurent's scribblings unpublishable, the distance he has tried to establish between this failed philosopher and himself, a distance which is essential to his position of authority and superiority, has been effectively eroded. The authority and indeed the neutrality of the third-person narrator are undermined as a result.

But *Isidora* goes beyond this undermining of the objectivity of the speaking subject of literature to reveal the masculine perspective underlying philosophy. This is achieved through the juxtaposition, in the first part of the novel, of Jacques Laurent's philosophical treatise and journal. The separation of Jacques's reflections into two different 'cahiers', one entitled 'Travail' and the other 'Journal', reveals a need to guarantee the supposed objectivity and purity of rational thought, and to preserve it from the commotion of the emotional and sensual. Jacques here inscribes himself in a Cartesian tradition which sees the body as the chief impediment to objectivity, and which seeks to establish a distinction between the rational and the emotional. The distinction between head and heart, intelligible and sensible that the titles of the two *cahiers* reflect, is, however, undermined, and supposedly objective thought is shown to be influenced by the thinking subject's personal and emotional life.

It is Jacques's contact with, and later his love for Julie, the ideal woman, which is shown to be the source of his idealisation of women in general. Reflecting on the nature of women, Jacques Laurent makes the following entry in the notebook entitled 'Travail': 'La bonté des femmes est immense. D'où vient donc que la bonté n'a pas de droits à l'action sociale en législation et en politique?' (p. 60). It is precisely that same day that Julie's servant had come to seek him out and give him money to help the poor inhabitants of the fifth floor. The charitable gesture of one woman instantly becomes a defining feature of women in general. The generalisation on the nature of

women on the basis of one woman's behaviour continues in his next philosophical note: 'L'homme est un insensé, un scélérat, un lâche, quand il calomnie l'être divin associé à sa destinée. La femme...' (p. 69). In this particular case, the fact that he has now met and spoken with this beautiful and chaste woman leads to his idealisation of women as divine creatures, though perhaps significantly creatures associated to the destiny of men and without a destiny of their own. The objectivity of Jacques's philosophical reflection is eroded by the events in his personal life which are recounted in his 'journal' (indeed this text gradually becomes dominant).

The combined undermining of the neutrality of the subject of philosophical discourse, and the revelation of his sexuate nature are themes which are surprisingly modern and which find echoes in contemporary feminist theory. Luce Irigaray, for example, writes of the need to question the universal nature of philosophy:

Quant à la philosophie, pour ce qui concerne la question de la femme - ce qui revient à la question de la différence sexuelle -, c'est bien elle qu'il faut interroger. [. . .] C'est bien l'ordre philosophique qu'il faut questionner, et *déranger*, en tant qu'il recouvre la différence sexuelle.<sup>40</sup>

By challenging what Irigaray earlier terms this 'discours des discours' (op. cit., p. 72), Sand destabilises what can be seen as the grounding of patriarchal society. By showing that philosophy is not gender-neutral, she attacks its pretence to authority and universality, and hence calls into question all those other philosophies which have tried to define the nature of woman and to explain sexual difference. The links established between events in Jacques's personal life and the ideas present in his intellectual work, and also the similarities between his ideas and those of other philosophers, underline the masculine perspective which dominates philosophical work on women's nature and which thus defines women in relation to men.

In part three of the novel, however, Isidora escapes the deforming categories imposed by both Jacques Laurent and the narrator, and begins to fashion her own identity.

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<sup>40</sup> Irigaray, *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un*, pp. 154-55, italics in original.

Like Lélia, Isidora rejects love relationships as they are currently constructed in society, although her refusal of love is motivated differently. Whereas Lélia felt disillusioned by a love that proclaimed itself to be spiritual, but which in the end revealed its attachment to physical pleasures, Isidora finally rejects a relationship with Jacques Laurent because he constantly compares her to Alice, whom he perceives to be pure and chaste, and because she realises that he does not love her. She leaves him to begin a new life in Italy, and her breaking free from this relationship leads to the ending of the romance plot and to an emphasis on how Isidora fashions a new identity for herself. In a letter to Alice she writes: 'Voyez combien je suis guérie! [. . .] Il y a plus d'un an que je regarde comme une angoisse mortelle le détachement que je porte aujourd'hui dans mon cœur avec une sorte de volupté' (p. 212). However, she still regards it as divine punishment that she is not able to inspire love from Jacques: 'Ah! cette parole est vraie: *Tu seras puni par où tu as péché!* [. . .] La femme sans frein et sans retenue mourra consumée par le rêve d'une passion qu'elle n'inspirera jamais' (p. 214, italics in original). This is a difficult break to make for a woman whose identity has been defined by the love of men, and hence by their desiring gaze, and yet it is a break which is necessary for her to begin to define her own identity. In her next letter, dated some ten years later, she writes: 'Ce n'est pas de Jacques que je suis guérie, c'est de l'amour!' (p. 216). She adds: 'je ressens une joie intérieure qui me semble durable et profonde' (p. 217). Isidora has come to realise the disadvantages of woman's identity being constructed around love, and hence in relation to the desiring male gaze. Talking of the value placed by patriarchal society on female beauty, she writes:

J'ai compris profondément cette ingratitude des hommes qui, après avoir adulé notre puissance, l'insulte et la raille dès qu'elle nous échappe. Et j'ai trouvé qu'il fallait être bien avilie pour regretter ce vain hommage dont la fumée dure si peu. (p. 218).

A case of sour grapes now that her own beauty is waning? A coming to terms with old age? As motivations, these cannot be ruled out, but it seems to me that there is some justification for seeing this as a final realisation of the fact that as women are



valued for beauty, this keeps them weak and dependent on men, who define their worth for them.

Away from society, Isidora is able to define her own image of herself, and from her description of this process it becomes apparent that she has learnt to see herself, not from the perspective of a man and based on male-imposed criteria of beauty, but from the perspective of a woman, and that as a result she now feels reconciled with herself. She is no longer an object of the male regard, and claims instead the position of female subject: 'C'est une autre femme, un autre *moi* qui commence' (p. 219, italics in original). Far from being the errant woman whom Sand rehabilitates and inscribes in a conventional feminine framework of maternity at the end of the novel, Isidora is a perfect example of a woman who frees herself from the male gaze and finds fulfilment in her adoption of her young servant Agathe, in the joys of maternal love, though significantly without the presence of the father figure.

Whereas for much of *Lélia* the traditional narrative has no hold, *Isidora* reveals the basis of male narratives, and reveals the male gaze which underlies both philosophy and literature. This novel points to the complexity of women's identity and collapses the reductive oppositions on which narrative coherence appears to be grounded, as well as underlining the need for women to break free and to forge their identity on their own terms. The critique of patriarchal thought fostered in both *Lélia* and *Isidora* is, however, less in evidence in *La Filleule*. This is linked to the fact that the heroine, Moréna, is only fourteen when she begins writing her journal, and little more than sixteen by the end of the novel. She is not therefore a grown woman resisting her positioning in society and the limits this imposes on her subjectivity, but a young girl trying to adapt to her position as 'other' in androcentric society, for Moréna is in fact doubly 'other', by virtue both of her sex and of her race (she is by birth a gypsy).

Structurally the novel is divided by the editor into two parts entitled 'Anicée' and 'Moréna', the names being those of the ideal woman with whom Stéphen, the male protagonist, is in love, and of his god-daughter, the passionate and rebellious gypsy.



The first part of the novel is characterised by a relative calm and order, and this is mirrored in the structure of the narrative, which is composed mostly of Stéphen's account of events in his memoirs, with one letter and the occasional interjection by the narrator-editor. The second part, which includes extracts from Moréna's journal and from Stéphen's memoirs, as well as letters, and third-person narration, is more polyphonic and more fragmented. There are also more ellipses and points where the narrator is forced to intervene to complete the story. In the first section of the novel relating to the ideal, devoted, maternal woman, the narrative is relatively unified and events are integrated into a first-person account corresponding broadly to the narrative of the romance. However, in the second part which is centred on Moréna, the speaking and desiring woman whom the narrator describes as 'cette âme mobile et violente',<sup>41</sup> the narrative is fragmented. The structure of the novel can thus be fitted into an opposition of bound and unbound heroines, and it is possible to argue that Moréna can scarcely be contained in the third-person narrative of the romance, and to show in addition that closure in the second part, and hence in the novel, only comes when she is enclosed in the heterosexual couple and when she has repressed her desires for Stéphen, her substitute father. However, the effect of this structure is not so much to raise questions about the limits of representation, as to juxtapose the construction of masculine and feminine identities in society, for the opposition of the two parts of the novel based on the Anicée/Moréna paradigm is to some extent misleading. Since the content of the first part relates not so much to Anicée as to Stéphen, and that of the second part to Moréna, *La Filleule* can be read as an illustration of the way men exist in society as subjects whilst women must seek social integration by situating themselves as objects of the male gaze.

The first part of the novel is made up of Stéphen's account of what he calls 'une phase de mon existence que j'ai besoin de me résumer à moi-même' (p. 36). His account of his development, which begins with the death of his mother and more or less ends on his engagement, and subsequent secret marriage to Anicée, reveals that

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<sup>41</sup> George Sand, *La Filleule* (Meylan: Éditions de l'Aurore, 1989), p. 168. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.

his insertion into the world as a subject depends on his detachment from his mother. Her death was an event of some importance for him because, as he makes clear, he had until this point existed only for her. In connection with his schooldays he writes:

J'avais travaillé avec ardeur pour être agréable à ma mère et pour la rejoindre. Elle m'avait dit en pleurant, le jour de notre séparation: «Mieux tu apprendras, plus tôt tu me seras rendu.» A chaque saison des vacances, elle m'avait répété ce vœu. Mon travail de chaque année avait été juste le double de celui de mes compagnons d'étude. Aucun d'eux n'avait sans doute une mère comme la mienne.  
Je n'avais aimé qu'elle avec passion. (p. 33)

This attachment to his mother had defined his life, and he had been obedient to her wishes. But now, at the age of sixteen, he is forced to leave behind his mother and to seek a position in society. Yet this society and its values are alien to him, and whilst he is prepared to obey his father 'par devoir' (p. 35), where he would have obeyed his mother 'par amour' (ibid.), he has no inclination to take up a profession and thus a position in society. He remains too attached to his mother, and when he eventually leaves for Paris to embark on further studies, he takes with him only a few of her personal possessions. His attic room in the Latin Quarter thus becomes a shrine to this woman:

J'ornai ma cellule à mon gré. Quelques fleurs sous le châssis de ma fenêtre [. . .], mes reliques dans une boîte à ouvrage de ma mère, un vieux châle qu'elle m'avait donné autrefois pour en faire un tapis de table et que, de crainte de l'user, je relevais à la place où j'installais mon travail, son pauvre petit piano que mon père consentit à m'envoyer, un couvre-pied qu'elle avait tricoté pour moi, voilà de quoi je me composai un luxe d'un prix et d'un charme inestimables. (pp. 36-37)

Such a fetish for objects associated with the loved one is symptomatic of his inability to let her go, to move on. Although Stéphen continues to study in Paris, his work lacks the direction that it had previously. He is unable to set himself a goal to work towards, and admits that such direction would only have been possible had his mother still been alive to tell him what she wanted him to do. Stéphen is stuck in a relation of dependence on his mother, and thus privileges the heart over the head:

J'étais un pauvre être de sentiment, et mon intelligence si vantée ne se trouvait en réalité que la très humble servante de mes affections. Les affections brisées, le cœur était vide, et l'esprit s'en allait à la dérive par un calme plat, flottant comme une embarcation [. . .] qui va où le flot voudra la faire échouer, la briser ou lui faire reprendre le courant. (p. 39)

Stéphen is ruled by his emotions and although he enjoys the independence of the male subject in society, he has not developed his own ambitions or desires. However, in order to integrate into society, Stéphen must reject his mother and transcend the emotional and affective to seek success based on intelligence and reason. This he does to some extent when he meets and falls in love with Anicée, since it is his desire to merit her in marriage that gives him an impetus to succeed in his chosen profession of botanist.

Stéphen first meets Anicée and her mother whilst staying in the forest of Fontainebleau. It is also at this point in the novel that he assumes responsibility for Moréna, after her mother, the gypsy Pilar, died in childbirth. Moréna will provide the link to Anicée because of the latter's desire to adopt the orphaned baby. He falls in love with Anicée almost immediately, and sees similarities between her mother and his own (although it is Anicée herself who is closer in age to Stéphen's mother). Their relationship develops around the baby Moréna, and in such conditions, Stéphen begins to rediscover his old self. Referring to Anicée and her mother, he writes:

En général, ces deux femmes vivaient comme cachées dans leur sanctuaire, subissant les visites avec une aménité résignée, et préférant une vie réglée et uniforme à tout autre genre d'existence.

C'est ainsi que j'avais vécu près de ma mère, et la destinée d'Anicée dans le présent était si semblable à la mienne dans le passé, qu'auprès d'elle je croyais recommencer à vivre dans les conditions normales de mon être. (p. 73)

Now that he is back in touch with the maternal element of his existence, he feels that his life has somehow become whole again, that he has found the missing piece needed for a complete existence.

However, at the same time Stéphen also appears to assume a more masculine position in society, and, positioning himself as the desiring subject, he writes: 'qu'importe de quel sentiment une femme nous aime, pourvu qu'elle nous aime quand nous l'adorons?' (p. 86). As the desiring male, he sets out to prove himself worthy of Anicée's love, and he writes to Mme Marange, Anicée's mother, to make clear his intentions: 'je serai votre fils par la volonté, par le dévouement, par le respect, par la soumission, par la tendresse' (p. 96). His narrative becomes that of the romance in which he sets out to merit the woman he desires, and he will do this by seeking success in the public sphere. However, Stéphen's inscription in the masculine, public sphere is not a complete one, and his attachment to a different set of values remains strong. This is evidenced by the presence of elements such as 'dévouement', 'tendresse' and 'soumission', more commonly associated with the feminine, in the list of qualities he intends to demonstrate to show himself worthy of Anicée's love. Stéphen is thus shown to have, to a large extent, the freedom to determine his own identity, and although gender conventions weigh on him, he is able to attain social and romantic success without repressing entirely the feminine side to his character. Whilst he may feel that he truly belongs in the private and emotional sphere, represented firstly by his mother and then by Anicée, he is free to engage in the public sphere and to seek recognition there. This freedom is, however, denied to Moréna, who must seek to establish her identity through love, that is to say by attracting the male gaze.

The inclusion of significant extracts from Moréna's journal in the second part of the novel gives privileged access to the psychology of this passionate heroine, who is trying to establish her identity. If the opening pages of *La Filleule* show Stéphen to have a mother fixation, it is the figure of the father who dominates in part two, for Moréna's desire to situate herself in a family structure and thus define her identity, is linked to the identity of the mysterious father figure who, although absent from her life, showers her with presents on her birthday:

C'était le cadeau mystérieux de tous les ans, le cadeau de mon père, car il existe celui-là, il s'occupe de moi, il me comble, il me pare, il me gâte... Dirai-je qu'il m'aime? Hélas! je ne l'ai jamais vu, je ne saurai peut-être jamais son nom. (p. 130)

What she calls her 'naissance [. . .] mystérieuse' (p. 127) is a source of constant perplexity to her, and, having imagined that Stéphen was in fact her father, she is forced to admit that this would be impossible for he is not sufficiently rich to shower her with such presents. She says of Stéphen: 'Il n'est ni mon père ni mon futur mari, et voilà les deux seuls hommes à qui je sois forcée de plaire!' (p. 137). From early in the novel she shows herself to be clearly aware of the importance of men in society. Linked to Moréna's uncertainties about her identity and her awareness of her otherness is a desire on her part to define her sense of worth, something which did not preoccupy Stéphen. Her sense of self-worth is reliant on the gaze of others:

Je vois bien que la première chose qu'on apprécie, *en regardant* Mamita [Anicée], c'est sa beauté *qui plaît aux yeux*, et qui fait qu'on l'aime tout de suite. Oui, oui, je vois bien que la beauté est la première richesse, la première puissance d'une femme, la seule durable, quoi qu'on en dise. (p. 129, *my italics*)

Moréna recognises the importance for a woman of attracting the gaze of others, and although this gaze is not specifically gendered here, her desire will be for the attentions of the male. The male gaze will define her worth and her father will assure her identity, and these will constitute the two leitmotifs of Moréna's narrative.

Despite being raised in an environment where the mother figure is important, Moréna's fixation is with the father figure, and she will seek his attention. Her feelings of rivalry with her adoptive mother, Anicée, and her desire for the father's love are of course entirely consistent with psychoanalytic theories of the young girl's development. However, in these theories, what intervenes to turn desire for the father into desire for another man is the interdict of incest. This interdict is absent here, for Moréna is certain that Stéphen is not her father, and she is also ignorant of the fact that he is secretly married to Anicée. Her desire to please him is strong, and her behaviour is dictated by the reaction she hopes to produce in him. The importance she attaches to his view of her is brought out clearly by her reaction when he describes her as a 'petite sauterelle' (p. 136):



Ah! je vois bien que, décidément, je suis laide; mais il aurait pu se dispenser de me le faire entendre si clairement. Alors il faudra que je m'arrange pour avoir beaucoup d'esprit; autrement, personne ne prendra garde à moi. (ibid.)

That this desire to please and to be noticed is directed principally at Stéphen is underlined in the next journal entry, dated four days later: 'Depuis quatre jours, j'ai pris mes leçons avec assiduité, j'ai étudié mon piano avec ardeur. C'est que mon parrain m'a encouragée' (ibid.). She defines herself in relation to the desiring male gaze, and she feels unworthy, ugly, when she does not attract this gaze: 'Il me trouve laide. C'est donc que je le suis. Si j'en étais sûre, je me tuerais!' (p. 139). When Stéphen becomes aware of these impossible desires, he moves immediately to put a stop to them by telling Moréna outright that he is married to Anicée. Moréna is shocked by this news, and after being forced as a result to renounce Stéphen, her desires crystallise around the search for her real father. She begins to transfer some of her affection to the Duc de Florès (who is indeed her father but who is not prepared to acknowledge this openly), and what makes this man appear attractive to her is his acknowledgement of her beauty, for he describes her as '*jolie comme un ange*' (p. 157, italics in original).

Moréna's moves towards the world of the duke are given encouragement by her stepbrother, Algénib (known also as Rosario), who suddenly reappears at this point in the novel and informs her that her mother was the gypsy Pilar. This revelation about her race confronts her with origins that, with her femininity, place her as doubly 'other' in society, and she declares: 'Voilà ce que je suis, moi, une bohémienne' (p. 167).<sup>42</sup> She remembers what Roque, one of Stéphen's friends, had said about the Bohemian race, describing them as 'laid, sales, misérables, affreux' (p. 166), and initially she feels humiliated. It is not perhaps too far-fetched to relate this to the young girl's realisation of her otherness, of her lack of penis, in Freud's account of the Oedipus complex, for, as the descendants of Eve, women too are from 'une race

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<sup>42</sup> The issue of Moréna's race links her to other characters in Sand's novels who are also not white (Noun, Consuelo and Aldine's servant Zoé in *Monsieur Sylvestre*), and affirms Sand's interest in issues of race, as well as those of class and gender.



maudite' (ibid.). Whilst she experiences this double otherness as signifying her lack of value, Algénib encourages her to seek acknowledgement for her beauty by presenting herself in society and by actively seeking the male gaze. Indeed, it is through him that she finally recognises her own beauty when, seated before a mirror, she becomes aware of his desiring gaze: 'je m'imagine que je dois être jolie, et à présent que vous regardez dans la glace avec moi, en ayant l'air d'être enchanté de ma figure, je me vois par vos yeux et je me plais' (p. 170). Algénib presents her difference of race as an additional factor in her desirability, and it thus becomes merely a supplement to her femininity: 'Vous êtes *autre* [. . .]. Vous ne ressemblez à aucune [dame]; vous êtes étrange; c'est être supérieure à toutes' (p. 170, italics in original). Convinced by his assertions that her race and her beauty will assure her success in society, she agrees to live with her father, the duke, who is willing to take responsibility for her, though without revealing publicly that she is his daughter. She is thus separated from Anicée, her adoptive mother, and situates herself in society where she assumes all the traditional attributes of femininity, and the emphasis is placed on her appearance and her ability to please others, with her racial origins seen as adding value to her as sexual object.

But Moréna does not find happiness in this world, and the narrator informs us that 'Morénita continua à s'ennuyer sans savoir pourquoi' (p. 191). Her diary gives a better indication of the source of this discontent, for in it she addresses the following remark to Anicée: 'Vous m'avez aimée comme je ne le serai jamais de personne, pas même mon père, qui ne chérit de moi que ce qu'il voit' (p. 177). This sense of disillusionment with the duke seems to cause Moréna's unhappiness, for his unwillingness to admit that he is her father causes her to doubt his love. This remark also seems to indicate an awareness on her part that being the object of the desiring male gaze does not bring happiness. However, this is not a realisation which she either develops or acts on, and her protest here is not against the structure of patriarchal society, but rather a detachment from this one man who, in her eyes, rejects her. This becomes apparent in one of her journal entries: 'Vous me faites orpheline, mon père? Eh bien, tant mieux! vous me faites libre' (p. 191). Later she

will affirm this same freedom when the duke tries to impose his authority on her after he has found her alone in her room with Algénib. She says to him: 'Le jour où je saurai de qui je suis la fille, à qui je dois confiance et soumission entière, je serai fort coupable si je manque à des devoirs si doux et si faciles' (p. 206). Moréna thus rejects the father who rejects her.

This detachment from the authority of the father will correspond to a return to the mother. Although the duke has her cloistered, she escapes with the help of Algénib, who abandons her in order to test her love. In one of the many coincidences and chance encounters in Sand's work, she is subsequently rescued by Stéphen and Roque. She immediately asks them for news of Anicée, and in accordance with the latter's wishes, they test her devotion by telling her that her mother is ill. Moréna's repentance for abandoning her mother is evident in her reaction to this news:

O mon Dieu, elle est donc bien malade? s'écria Morénita en pâissant. Partons! Elle me demande... c'est donc qu'elle va mourir? Et l'enfant repentante, oubliant sa situation personnelle, tomba défaillante sur une chaise. Tout son ancien amour pour Anicée lui revenait au cœur, et les sanglots l'étouffèrent subitement. (p. 227)

It is the thought of the possible death of Anicée which reunites Moréna with the mother figure, and this is represented in the text by the fact that she is designated again as an 'enfant'. She also rejects the authority of her father in this scene:

Le duc de Florès n'est pas mon père! dit Morénita avec force. Il me l'a dit, je dois le croire. Il n'a aucun droit sur moi. Je n'ai qu'une parente, qu'une mère, qu'une tutrice, c'est votre femme, mon parrain, c'est mamita bien-aimée. Les lois ne me font dépendre d'aucune autorité. Mon cœur est libre de choisir celle qu'il me convient de regarder comme légitime et sacrée. (p. 229)

Moréna thus situates herself on the side of Anicée, her adoptive mother, the only person who had ever really loved and understood her. However, she can only situate herself briefly under maternal authority, for her identity in society is dependent on a man, and the above speech is in fact specifically a rejection of the duke's power to oppose her planned marriage to Algénib. Moréna cannot make the link to the mother

an integral part of her identity, and indeed the fostering of this link is not encouraged in society. The fact that she cannot disengage fully from the Law of the Father results in a number of negative undercurrents at the end of the novel, and as both Moréna and Algénib set out to pursue an artistic career, Moréna's desire for glory and her husband's passions, jealousy and power lead Marie-Paule Rambeau to speak of 'lendemains gros de menaces' for this couple.<sup>43</sup>

This contrasts with the peaceful contentment of Stéphen and Anicée, who retreat into the private sphere, into their 'félicité cachée' (p. 236) at the end of the novel. Theirs is a relationship which is placed under the sign of the mother, for Stéphen's engagement with the public sphere was only a temporary one, and once he has gained the recognition and hence the social status which can bridge the difference in class and wealth between him and Anicée to make their marriage socially acceptable, he retreats into the private world of the emotions which was his at the beginning. The happiness of this couple, and the suggestion in the account of Moréna's development that true happiness was only possible with her mother, accords positive value to what one might call a Law of the Mother. It is indeed the idea of an existence placed under the Law of the Mother which Stéphen and Anicée's relationship appears to exemplify at the end of the novel, since it is presented not only as marginal to a society under the Law of the Father, but also as firmly inscribed in the private sphere and in a rejection of the public. This notion of the potential importance of the private sphere, to which both Lélia and Isidora also retreat, is a theme which will be explored in greater detail by the female-voiced narratives included in Part Three of this thesis, where the issue of a positive feminine identity, detached from the desiring male gaze, will also be highlighted.

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<sup>43</sup> Marie-Paule Rambeau, 'Et si nous relisions *La Filleule?*', in *Journée George Sand: Hommage à Georges Lubin* (Paris: Centre de recherche, d'étude et d'édition de correspondances du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, Université de Paris IV, 1985), pp. 63-75 (p. 74).

### (iii) Conclusion

From the silence to which the female characters are ultimately consigned in the epistolary novels, the heroines of *Lélia*, *Isidora* and *La Filleule* speak out against society and voice their desires. Whilst, as I have shown, their desiring nature subverts the telos of the romance narrative, the fact that they are also to some extent speaking subjects creates polyphonic narratives which lack the single, dominant, authoritative voice on which the coherence of both the male-voiced and epistolary novels rested. All three heroines can be seen as 'unchained gazelles', as active and desiring women. Although it is *Lélia* who most emphatically resists definition by the male gaze, and who thus most undermines monologic narrative coherence, both *Isidora* and *Moréna*, by speaking out, reveal the restrictiveness of traditional definitions of femininity. Their access to the logos is clearly transgressive, as is evidenced by an episode recounted in *Valentine*. Here the eponymous heroine describes the difficulties she experienced in writing to her sister:

Avec combien de peine et de précautions je parvins à me procurer une allumette, un flambeau, et tout ce qu'il fallait pour écrire, sans faire de bruit, sans éveiller ma surveillante! J'y réussis cependant; mais je laissai tomber quelques gouttes d'encre sur mon drap, et le lendemain je fus questionnée, menacée, grondée!<sup>44</sup>

The image of the ink on the sheet recalls the blood-stained sheet that attested to women's loss of their virginity on their wedding night. Writing, laying claim to the logos, for a woman is thus equivalent to the loss of her chastity and purity, and as incompatible with an ideal of femininity. It also disrupts narrative coherence by denying to the male the right to speak from a position of authority. It is this, as much as these heroines' refusal to be bound which undermines narrative coherence.

The novels included in this chapter thus constitute an important critique of the way the patriarchal system works. Freed from the restrictiveness of an autobiographical approach, which sees George Sand as the frigid *Lélia*, the philosophical Jacques

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<sup>44</sup> George Sand, *Valentine* (Meylan: Éditions de l'Aurore, 1988), p. 63.

Laurent, and the stoical Jacques, and which reads *La Filleule* as a combination of the story of Sand's own experiences with her mother and grandmother, and her problems with her own daughter Solange, these texts not only uncover the masculine bias of the 'universal' subject of literature and philosophy, but also show female characters struggling for identity in a patriarchal society inimical to their desires. As the contrast of the epistolary and 'fragmented' narratives reveals, when women break out of the position of silent object, the conflict of voices thus created undermines not only the unified structure of the monologic narrative, but also the very basis of a society that presented itself as natural and universal.

## Part Three

### Voices of Difference: Female Protagonists Tell Their Own Stories

Given the increased interest in questions of female voice and of voicing or writing the feminine on the part of feminist critics and theorists,<sup>1</sup> it seems surprising that so few of the novels written by Sand towards the end of her career have been the focus of critical attention.<sup>2</sup> There seems to be an implicit assumption that it is the novels from *Indiana* (1832) to *La Petite Fadette* (1848) which constitute the privileged corpus for the study of Sand's feminism, and this despite the predominantly male narrative voice of these novels. Yet it is in the period from 1859 to 1872 that Sand produced the small number of novels in her vast *œuvre* narrated either principally or exclusively by women: *Flavie* (1859), *La Confession d'une jeune fille* (1864), *Césarine Dietrich* (1870), *Malgrétout* (1870) and *Nanon* (1872). Whilst female-voiced narratives could hardly be said to predominate in these latter years of Sand's literary career (during this period, Sand published 23 novels, of which only the 5 cited above have female

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<sup>1</sup> Studies as diverse in their approaches as Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), Hélène Cixous's essay 'Sorties' in *La Jeune Née* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1975) and much of Luce Irigaray's work from *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un* to *Sexes et genres à travers les langues* (Paris: Grasset, 1990) bear witness to this leitmotif in feminist thought.

<sup>2</sup> *Nanon* is the exception here, for it has been the subject of a number of studies, stimulated both by the publication of a new edition in 1987, and by the renewed interest in literature of the French Revolution around the time of the bicentenary in 1989.



narrators, the remainder being made up of novels with a male narrator and epistolary novels),<sup>3</sup> their existence in a corpus of some seventy novels, most of which have a male narrator, unquestionably constitutes a phenomenon worthy of examination. It is on these female-voiced narratives that this chapter will concentrate, in order to consider not only the ways in which the female protagonists of these novels write differently to men, but also how freeing women from the position of silent object of male desire works as a narrative strategy.

Two features characterise these novels: all are written in the first person; and three of the five are epistolary novels peopled predominantly by female correspondents.<sup>4</sup> This in itself is revealing, for absent from this important sub-set of novels is a text narrated exclusively in the third person by a female narrator. It is an absence which appears all the more marked given the dominance of the third-person male narrator, not only in Sand's work, but more generally in literature of the time. Sand's exclusion of a female voice from this role seems to reinforce the silence to which women were reduced in the public sphere, and to continue to confine them to the private, domestic and emotional sphere, thus apparently preserving intact patriarchal gender identities. But to insist, in a literary as in a wider political context, that the dismantling of these gender identities is only possible if women occupy the positions of power and authority currently claimed by men, is merely to reverse the 'order of the same', that is, to repeat the injustices and hierarchies of the current system, to re-position women within the masculine, phallogentric order and to emphasise that subjectivity depends on identification with a masculine position. This 'absence' in Sand's novels should not perhaps be read negatively as an exclusion from power but as an affirmation of difference.

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<sup>3</sup> These figures are based on the bibliography of Sand's works compiled by Anna Szabó in *Le Personnage sandien*, pp. 146-48. Pierre Salomon's bibliography in *George Sand* (Meylan: Éditions de l'Aurore, 1984), pp. 255-58, omits *Flavie*, *Césarine Dietrich* and *Constance Verrier*, and thus lists only 20 novels for this period.

<sup>4</sup> In *Nanon* the female protagonist is writing her memoirs, whereas in *Césarine Dietrich* the narrator is female and intradiegetic.

But that is to anticipate on the arguments of this chapter. What is clear at this stage is that as well as highlighting, whether positively or negatively, women's inscription in the private sphere, these first-person and epistolary novels develop the themes of female self-expression and self-definition evident in earlier novels. Indeed, in these later novels the link between self-expression and self-definition becomes more explicit, for their narrative structure foregrounds and problematises the process of writing in a way that first-person male narratives do not. When these female protagonists write their life-stories and hence often their love-stories, it is not with the intention of communicating some inviolable truth about life. Rather, these narratives are presented as processes of dialogue or introspection leading to self-understanding and to the affirmation of an identity. Whereas for male protagonists and narrators, identity often appears to be assumed unproblematically, and writing appears natural, for Sand's female protagonists and narrators this is not the case.

By reading these 'private' narratives as concerned with issues of identity and difference, one can consider Sand as an author who raises questions and works through issues that continue to be of concern to contemporary feminists. Whilst the heroines in these novels are clearly not the only ones in Sand's work grappling with these issues, the narrative perspective here foregrounds the question of feminine identity. As they highlight the process of female self-definition, these narratives shift the focus away from the centrality of men's concerns and of male desire, and emphasise the link between women's attainment of subjectivity and their emergence from the silence to which patriarchy has confined them. This link between language and subjectivity is discussed by modern feminists, and Irigaray writes in *Je, tu, nous*: 'Selon moi, il faut être un *sujet* féminin libre. Pour cette libération, la langue représente un outil de production indispensable'.<sup>5</sup> However, the issue of women's accession to subjectivity is far from being unproblematic, and insofar as it raises issues of identity, difference and essentialism, this debate provides a useful theoretical and

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<sup>5</sup> Luce Irigaray, *Je, tu, nous: Pour une culture de la différence* (Paris: Grasset, 1990), p. 89 (italics in the original).

philosophical background against which to set Sand's narratives of female self-definition.

The freeing of women from silence and the refusal of object status that Irigaray advocates are largely uncontentious issues for feminists today, given that this challenges men's definition of *woman's* identity which is based on their (male) needs and fantasies. Irigaray's reflection on a subjectivity for women, and emphasis on the concept of female difference are, however, more controversial, since they raise the spectre of essentialism. When, for example she writes in *J'aime à toi* that, 'j'ai essayé de définir l'altérité objective de moi pour moi en tant qu'appartenant au genre féminin', she is open to attack on the charge of seeking to define an essence of *woman*.<sup>6</sup> But there is at least a strategic importance in affirming women's difference: given the supposed neutrality of society and discourse, it allows for a challenging of the idea of a universal subject; it also allows women to enter the public sphere, but to avoid identification with a masculine subject position. In an interview with Verena Andermatt Conley, Cixous speaks of the problems raised by women's demands to enter society:

It is true that if we enter society to become men, we have lost everything. [...] Can one win? Only on condition that upon entering society one does not identify with men but that one works on other possibilities of living, on other modes of life, on other relationships to the other, other relationships to power, etc., in such a way that one also brings about transformations in oneself, in others, and in men.<sup>7</sup>

This is a position echoed by Irigaray in *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un* when she writes: 'Si les femmes se laissent prendre au piège du pouvoir, au jeu de l'autorité, si elles se laissent contaminer par le fonctionnement «paranoïaque» de la politique masculine, elles n'ont plus rien à dire ni à faire en tant que femmes'.<sup>8</sup> According to these

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<sup>6</sup> See chapter one of Tina Chanter's *Ethics of Eros: Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 1995) for an overview of the essentialist debate and a compelling rebuttal of essentialist readings of Irigaray.

<sup>7</sup> Verena Andermatt Conley, *Hélène Cixous: Writing the Feminine* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), pp. 135-36.

<sup>8</sup> Irigaray, *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un*, pp. 160-61.

theorists, women need subject status as much as they need to enter into current economic and cultural spheres. Indeed subject status is a precondition for entry into this public order if women are to reform rather than to perpetuate the structures of the current social order. In this context Irigaray writes:

Que veut dire le travail et l'appartenance politique des femmes sans identité civile qui leur soit appropriée? Ne risquent-elles pas d'y soutenir et d'y promouvoir un patrimoine et une société auxquels elles demeurent étrangères et qui, pour une part, les anéantissent comme personnes?<sup>9</sup>

It is with this in mind that one can profitably return to discussion of Sand, for while an anti-essentialist perspective is likely only to produce negative readings of her treatment of women's subjectivity, considering the strategies of difference at work in these novels allows one to place her within a tradition of French feminist thought which advocates women's affirmation of their difference rather than their alignment with masculine models of subjectivity.

(i) '*Le Style Homme*' and '*Le Style Femme*': '*Le Marquis de Villemer*'

*Le Marquis de Villemer* (1861), although not one of the female-voiced narratives, provides useful material for determining what Sand posits as the characteristics of a feminine subjectivity. In this novel Sand juxtaposes two letters, one written by Urbain, the male protagonist, the other by Caroline, the *demoiselle de compagnie* of Urbain's mother, and the woman to whom he will be married at the end of the novel. The author's intention of contrasting masculine and feminine forms of writing is made explicit in two letters to her editor Buloz. In the first of these letters, dated 22 June 1860, she discusses the problematic length of the novel and the passages where editorial cuts could be made, but she justifies both the inclusion and the length of Urbain's letter: 'je veux que sa lettre reste très descriptive, j'ai beaucoup soigné le contraste de cette lettre d'*homme* avec la lettre de *femme* qui suit'.<sup>10</sup> The following month, when she has finished correcting the proofs and is about to send the first part

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<sup>9</sup> Luce Irigaray, *Le Temps de la différence* (Paris: Hachette, 1989), p. 57.

<sup>10</sup> Sand, *Correspondance*, XV (1981), 838 (italics in original).

of the novel back to Buloz, she again defends the break in the action that these two letters represent:

Celle [sic] lettre *unique* où il [Urbain] montre le sérieux de son esprit et où j'ai tâché de prendre le style *homme*, a été soignée par moi, et je pense avoir fait aussi rapidement que possible passer en revue à un esprit sérieux les diverses observations qu'il doit faire. La lettre suivante de Caroline est tout autre, elle parle en femme, et ce contraste, s'il n'est pas trop *manqué*, peut sembler agréable et faire pardonner le temps d'arrêt de l'action.<sup>11</sup>

Although letters punctuate the narrative of *Le Marquis de Villemer*, this is indeed the only sustained example of Urbain's writing included in the novel: whereas Caroline frequently writes letters to her sister, Urbain is engaged in the apparently more serious task of writing an historical study of aristocratic titles. The juxtaposition of these two letters in chapters 7 and 8,<sup>12</sup> is thus all the more marked.

The way these two letters are presented within the novel immediately sets them apart, and reminds us how difference is treated in the narratives of patriarchy. The prominence given to the marquis's letter is signalled on a structural level not only by its length, but also by the fact that it constitutes a separate chapter in the novel. These elements emphasise the formal nature of the marquis's letter, an effect which is heightened by the title given to chapter 7: 'Lettre du marquis de Villemer au duc d'Aléria' (p. 83). Caroline's letter on the other hand is not reproduced in its entirety, but is included in chapter 8 with another, later letter, and is introduced by the narrator in these terms: 'Le même jour où le marquis écrivait à son frère, Caroline écrivait à sa sœur et lui *esquissait à sa manière* le pays où elle se trouvait' (p. 93, my italics). Although both characters write about the landscape surrounding them, Caroline's description is characterised by the verb 'esquisser' which implies superficiality rather than depth. This impression is reinforced by the phrase 'à sa manière' which establishes a difference, not only with the marquis's writing, but also by implication with that of this male narrator ('her' way not being the same as 'our' way, which is

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<sup>11</sup> Sand, *Correspondance*, XVI (1981), 16-17 (italics in original).

<sup>12</sup> George Sand, *Le Marquis de Villemer* (Meylan: Éditions de l'Aurore, 1988), pp. 83-95. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.

the accepted way of writing). This short presentation perpetuates the equation of difference with inferiority, which has been a constant in Sand's representations of patriarchal discourse. The challenge now is to effect a valorisation of this difference as something positive for women.

In order to situate the content of these letters, it may be useful to sketch briefly the events of the plot so far. At the point in the novel when the marquis de Villemer writes this letter to his brother, the duc d'Aléria, he has left Paris to visit his illegitimate son near Le Puy. The existence of this child is unknown to the other characters with the exception of the marquis's brother. Caroline de Saint-Geneix, born of a noble but impoverished family from the provinces, has been forced to accept paid employment with madame de Villemer in Paris in order to provide for her widowed sister and family. At the time of writing, she has just arrived at madame de Villemer's summer residence, and her joy on rediscovering the countryside is great, thus contrasting with the rather more depressing tone of the marquis's letter. Beyond this superficial contrast, however, lie a number of differences which provide an indication of what, for Sand, might be the various characteristics of masculine and feminine subject positions.

Although the marquis's journey away from Paris is motivated by personal reasons, discussion of the personal is all but excluded from his letter, which is characterised by an abundance of information about the area around Le Puy. Urbain's letter is centred on the transmission of knowledge: in it he discusses the noble family which once ruled the region, describes the topography of this area, particularly its volcanic landscape, gives a social history of the region and reflects on the character of the people who live there. This exclusion of the personal is interesting, for it reveals a particular way of relating to the world, which is especially evident in Urbain's discussion of the *mores* of the inhabitants. The purpose of his research here is to 'retrouver dans les êtres actuels la trace des vicissitudes sociales' (p. 88), and the following observations typify his findings: '*J'écoutai des paysans qui buvaient*'; '*à côté des vices que je te signale, je pressens et je vois de grandes qualités*' (p. 89, my italics). What these remarks reveal



is that his methods of study are those of observation and listening, rather than interaction and discussion with these people. This is a vertical relationship of detached, superior subject to object, which excludes the emotional and the personal, thus ensuring the supposed objectivity of his study.

This 'masculine' position of detachment and domination will repeat itself in Urbain's description of his natural surroundings. Although nature may react upon him as a subject, he is not open to it, for he approaches it with certain preconditions which must be met:

Les temples comme les montagnes n'ont d'imposant que leurs proportions relatives, l'harmonie de leurs rapports avec les besoins de notre imagination. [. . .] Il faut que la hardiesse des masses ranime en moi quelque fibre hardie, que la placidité ou la furie des couleurs apaise ou enflamme mon sentiment. Je [. . .] m'abandonne entièrement à ce que je cherche, et si rien ne s'empare de moi, c'est qu'il n'y a là rien pour moi. (p. 86)

Although presented as such, this does not constitute openness or abandonment to nature, for the needs of his imagination remain central at all times. In his presentation of this volcanic landscape, the importance of the totalising gaze is apparent:

A chaque détour anguleux de ces coulées, on entre dans un désordre nouveau qui semble aussi infranchissable que celui que l'on quitte; mais quand des bords élevés de cette enceinte tourmentée on peut l'embrasser d'un coup d'œil, on y retrouve les vastes proportions et les suaves harmonies qui font qu'un tableau est admirable. (p. 84)

Through the dominant gaze from an elevated position, disorder is turned into unity and harmony, differences are neutralised, and the scene becomes 'admirable'. But this is only possible when his mind and imagination dominate nature, and when it can be made to conform to his conditions for beauty, which are presented as being universal aesthetic criteria. These conditions exclude the differences which create disorder, and valorise instead unity and harmony. This detachment from nature sets Urbain apart from the local people, who are profoundly marked by the landscape and by many years of a feudal régime. He describes them as 'une race très caractérisée qui est en

harmonie physique avec le sol qui la porte: maigre, sombre, rude, et comme anguleuse dans ses formes et dans ses instincts' (p. 88). Urbain's superiority is assured by the subordination of nature to his self, through his distancing of himself from the object being studied. However, by his use of the first-person plural 'nous', such an attitude is presented not as being specific to him, but as natural and universal:

Nous étudions et interrogeons la nature avec notre cœur et notre esprit, comme si, de son sourire ou de sa menace, nous attendions l'apaisement ou l'embrassement de nos pensées. (p. 87)

This subordination of nature to intellect is presented as a universal truth, and yet it is no more than a generalisation from Urbain's own experience. Indeed, he admits to generalising, and acknowledges that he has forgotten his suffering through writing and 'en généralisant mes impressions' (p. 90). But this way of relating to the world and to others is neither universal nor inevitable. By highlighting this tendency to move from the particular to the general in a letter which she presents as being representative of masculine writing, Sand insists again on the fact that the discourse of universality and neutrality is in fact grounded in the centrality of a male consciousness.

Whilst on one level the informative nature of this letter reflects the seriousness and erudition of Urbain's character, his tendency to generalise also hides a reluctance to talk about the personal. It is only at the end of his letter that Urbain begins to speak in detail about his real purpose in visiting this area, that is, to visit his son. But this is not easy for him, and he admits his discomfort when discussing this interpersonal relationship:

Cher frère, tu as exigé une longue lettre, prévoyant que, dans mes heures de solitude et d'insomnie, je songerais trop à moi-même, à ma triste vie, à mon douloureux passé, auprès de cet enfant qui dort là pendant que je t'écris! Il est vrai que sa présence réveille bien des blessures, et que c'est m'avoir rendu service que de me forcer à m'oublier moi-même en généralisant mes impressions. - Pourtant. . . je trouve là aussi des attendrissements immenses qui ne sont pas sans douceur. Fermerai-je ma lettre sans te parler de lui? - Tu vois, j'hésite, je crains de te faire sourire. - Tu as la prétention de détester les enfants. Moi, sans éprouver cette répugnance, je redoutais autrefois le contact de ces êtres dont la fragile candeur effrayait ma raison. Aujourd'hui je suis bien changé, et quand tu

devrais te moquer de moi, il faut que je t'ouvre mon âme sans réserve.  
[ . . . ] Je dois, pour que tu me connaisses tout entier, surmonter la  
mauvaise honte. (p. 90)

Writing appears to be regarded by these two characters as a means of repressing personal feelings and emotions rather than of analysing the self. For these two men, the irrationality of feelings should be banished from writing, and as a result Urbain must overcome a fear of mockery and a sense of shame in order to speak about this seemingly taboo subject. Although the place the personal occupies in this discussion is reduced even further by his inclusion of information on the material well-being of the child, he nonetheless expresses the strong paternal bond he feels, and the love he has for his son:

Je l'aime! Je sens qu'il m'appartient et que je lui appartiens également. Je sens qu'il est moi, oui moi, beaucoup plus que sa pauvre mère; à mesure que ses traits et ses instincts se dessinent, je cherche vainement en lui quelque chose qui me la rappelle, et ce quelque chose semble ne pas devoir éclore. (p. 91)

But this love of an other is based on the masculine concepts of sameness and ownership. His love for his son seems to be dependent on him resembling his father, on the exclusion of the mother, and therefore on his exclusive ownership of this child. The child as other, emotional rather than rational, is seen as somehow dangerous, and Urbain admits that he perceived the ingenuousness of children as a threat to his reason. By breaking the link to the mother, the child can be brought into the 'order of the same' and its otherness neutralised. But Urbain's wariness of what is different reappears as he ends this brief interlude of the personal with the words: 'Mais c'est assez, je ne veux pas te paraître trop enfant moi-même' (ibid.). Here again the child represents the emotional and irrational from which he seeks to distance himself, the difference from which he must protect himself. Order, both in the patriarchal world and in Urbain's narrative, depends on excluding the other (the mother), dominating it (nature), or on neutralising otherness (his child), and the masculine subject position appears to be constructed accordingly.

Caroline's letter is very different, and is characterised by a spontaneity and openness that are lacking in the marquis's letter. In addition, her letter lacks the scholarship displayed by Urbain, and replaces this with a more human element. This contrast may appear somewhat clichéd, in that it opposes masculine *profondeur* and feminine *légèreté*, but these superficial differences obscure deeper and more significant distinctions, for Caroline's letter expresses a different relation to the other. The importance of interaction with the other is evident in her desire to write to, and remain in touch with her sister. This recalls what she has already told her sister about madame de Villemer's extensive correspondence:

La correspondance [. . .] n'est nullement une nécessité de position ni d'intérêts. C'est un besoin qu'elle éprouve de causer avec ses amis absents. C'est, dit-elle, une manière de parler, d'échanger ses idées, qui varie le seul plaisir qu'elle connaisse, celui d'être en communication continuelle avec l'esprit d'autrui. (p. 53)

These two female characters share a common desire for communication and interaction with others, which is also discernible in the openness of Caroline's letter to her sister. Nothing of her thoughts and feelings is held back, and the letter is composed of these as much as it is of description of the area around the Château de Séval. The subjective is therefore intertwined with, and accorded equal importance to the objective. This inclusion of the personal makes Caroline's letter less a transmission of information about her new environment than an expression of her need to interact with her sister, for her joy in the midst of nature is tinged by regret at her sister's absence: 'voilà que je pense que je suis beaucoup plus loin de vous qu'auparavant! Et quand vous reverrai-je?' (p. 95). Caroline longs for her sister's presence, and, rather than being simply a means of providing an organised and objective description of the area, writing becomes a way of integrating this presence into her life, of overcoming the distance that separates them, and of interacting with this other by sharing her feelings and impressions in an open and spontaneous way.

Such interaction is also evident in Caroline's description of the countryside which reveals an openness to the charms and beauty of nature. She does not seek harmony

in this landscape, but is instead open to the multiplicity of plants that grow there and to its wild beauty: 'dans ces coins abandonnés à eux-mêmes la nature s'en donne à cœur joie de se faire belle et sauvage' (p. 94). This openness manifests itself in her narrative by an attention to detail and by the fact that she does not seek to dominate the landscape with a totalising gaze. Indeed, when she is in a position to command a panoramic view of the valley, her account of this is remarkably brief, and is accorded little importance. Unlike Urbain, Caroline does not exclude or detach herself from the otherness of nature, but rather seems to draw energy and life from contact with it. In the midst of this natural setting she can say: 'je me sens revivre [. . .] je vais m'appartenir d'une manière agréable' (p. 95). Nature gives her back her sense of self, and in it she is afforded a sense of subjectivity denied her in society and in her duties towards the marquise. Rather than using this freedom to indulge her own fantasies, Caroline will instead devote herself to the concerns of her family, for the other remains central to her concerns at all times. In her letter she addresses her sister directly: 'Oh! comme je vais marcher, et t'écrire, et penser à toi en liberté! Hélas! si j'avais là seulement un de nos enfants, Lili ou Charlot, comme je le promènerais, comme je lui apprendrais à connaître toutes les choses de la campagne!' (ibid.). When Caroline uses the first-person plural form ('nos enfants'), it is not to make some universal claim, but rather to place herself on an equal footing with the mother and to emphasise co-operation. This blurs the distinction of 'yours' and 'mine', and thus contrasts with Urbain's insistence on this distinction, on his child as *his* property.

The contrast Sand establishes here is one based on the difference of the masculine and feminine relationship to the other, rather than on superficial differences of state of mind and content, and it is a contrast which is confirmed in a later letter from Caroline to her sister (pp. 193-97). This letter is written from the area around Le Puy,<sup>13</sup> where she has sought refuge after learning of the marquis's desire to marry her and of his mother's opposition to this. The greater factual content of this letter and its similarities with Urbain's 'masculine' letter, have led Christine Planté to argue that

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<sup>13</sup> This was the area from which Urbain wrote his letter to his brother.

'[ces] observations sur le pays rapprochent l'homme et la femme au lieu de les opposer'.<sup>14</sup> From this she concludes that Sand's affirmation of a difference in masculine and feminine perspectives in her letter to Buloz is something of a red herring, designed to hide the rather more subversive contention that men and women are fundamentally the same. The two letters do indeed have much in common, since both protagonists speak of the character of the local inhabitants, their miserable living conditions, the lacework done by the women, and the power of the Church. However, these are only superficial similarities and a clear difference of perspective remains. Urbain for instance makes the following observations:

La rudesse des idées fait celle des mœurs. L'homme qui comprend mal l'esprit des religions comprend mal la vie et se dénature lui-même. [. . .] Le paysan [. . .] ne jouit de rien et semble n'avoir besoin de rien. Sa maison est d'une malpropreté inouïe. Le plafond, recouvert d'un treillis de lattes, sert de réceptacle à tous les aliments en même temps qu'à toutes les guenilles de la maison. On est suffoqué, en y entrant, de l'odeur nauséabonde du lard rance mêlée à celle de toutes les choses immondes qui pendent là en guise de lustres. (p. 89)

Les femmes ont toutes l'air hardi et cordial. [. . .] Elles ne manquent pas tant de beauté que de charme. [. . .] Le manque absolu de propreté rend leur toilette désagréable à regarder. Dans la montagne, c'est une exhibition de guenilles incolores sur de longues jambes nues et fangeuses, sans préjudice des bijoux d'or, et même de diamants au cou et aux oreilles, contraste de luxe et de misère qui m'a rappelé les mendiants de Tivoli.

Pourtant les femmes d'ici sont laborieuses. L'art de la dentelle est enseigné par la mère à sa fille. (pp. 89-90)

These remarks exemplify the position of superior, detached observer that Urbain adopts in his letter. His study of the lifestyle of the local people appears objective and authoritative, and both the lack of cleanliness of these people and the rags they wear are explained by his initial authoritative statement: 'la rudesse des idées fait celle des mœurs' (p. 89). As she pursues her 'commerce de mercerie' (p. 194), Caroline also

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<sup>14</sup> Christine Planté, 'Une lettre d'homme, une lettre de femme dans le *Le Marquis de Villemer*' (Unpublished paper given at a round-table discussion on 'L'Épistolaire: un genre féminin' at the Université de Paris VII on 4th December 1993).



has the opportunity to observe 'les mœurs et les usages du pays' (ibid.). Her interpretation is however quite different:

Je ne vends guère, car les femmes sont si absorbées par leur métier à dentelle qu'elles ne raccommoient ni leurs maris, ni leurs enfants, ni elles-mêmes. C'est ici le triomphe de la guenille portée avec ostentation. La dévotion est si exaltée qu'elle exclut tout bien-être matériel et même toute propreté, comme une superfluité profane. L'avarice y trouve son compte, et la coquetterie aussi, car si Justine me donnait à vendre des bijoux, j'aurais vite une clientèle plus avide de cela que de linge et de souliers. (p. 194)

Caroline has a greater understanding of the lifestyle of these people and can see how the various points noted by Urbain interact. Her insight into their mentality, based on personal contact, allows her to see that the misery of these people's living conditions is due not to a lack of religion, as Urbain claims, but to an excess of religious devotion. It is Caroline's engagement with the people that makes her interpretation the more plausible. However this engagement with the other goes further than that necessitated by her trade, for she appears to try to help them. Whilst both she and Urbain note with concern the pitiful amounts these women are paid for their lacework, he merely records this fact as a result of supply outstripping demand, and writes, 'Ceci est la loi et le châtement du commerce' (p. 90). Caroline, on the other hand, is more troubled by this and reacts in an active way:

Le peu qu'elles gagnent scandalise le voyageur. [. . .] C'est en vain que vous offrez à une paysanne de lui fournir les matériaux et de la payer cher. La pauvre femme soupire, regarde l'argent, secoue la tête, et répond que, pour profiter de la libéralité d'une personne qui ne l'emploiera pas toujours, que peut-être elle ne reverra même jamais, elle ne veut pas risquer de perdre la pratique de *son maître*. (pp. 194-95, italics in original)

By speaking to the local population, by trying to improve their material conditions, Caroline becomes more aware of the forces that shape their lives than could a detached observer like Urbain. She does not treat these people as objects, as inferiors, but relates to them as equals, engages with them as subjects. The difference in perspective that marked the earlier letters is not diminished by this letter, rather it is reinforced.

The juxtaposition of 'masculine' and 'feminine' narratives in *Le Marquis de Villemer* not only brings to light the different ways in which a male and a female character position themselves vis-à-vis the world and others around them, but it also undercuts the idea of a universal subject and a neutral discourse. By opposing masculine and feminine styles of writing, Sand shows that what is often taken for a serious, 'objective' style is masculine. This fact established, she creates the space for a different writing, that of the feminine, which is portrayed as an important constituent part of the creation of a different, feminine subjectivity. It is through writing that the heroines of Sand's female-voiced novels attempt to affirm an identity and to position themselves within a society which does not valorise their difference.

*Women as Speaking Subjects? 'Flavie', 'La Confession d'une jeune fille' and 'Malgrétout'*

Considered as a novel of woman's self-definition, *Flavie* is the study of a character who attempts to transform the position of desired female object into a subject position. Flavie is a young aristocratic woman who loves to dazzle in society, and whose principal concern is that she be seen as more beautiful, better dressed and certainly more admired than other women. Like Moréna in *La Filleule*, she constantly seeks the approving gaze of the men around her, and much of her narrative is based on her supposition that she is at the centre of male attention when this is not in fact the case. Anna Szabó is in many respects justified in describing the novel as 'fort banal' and the heroine as a 'jeune fille étourdie et sotte'.<sup>15</sup> Yet Szabó's negative comments betray a critical perspective which dictates that not only should a novel not deal with the commonplace, but also, and perhaps as a consequence of this, that silly, scatter-brained young girls should not be placed in the position of narrator. To approach *Flavie* from this perspective is, I think, to miss the point. It is precisely the narrative form which provides the key to appreciation and understanding of the novel,

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<sup>15</sup> Szabó, *Le Personnage sandien*, p. 38.

for it is important that women should speak, and in the first person, of the difficulty of constructing a feminine subject position within patriarchy.

*Flavie* is composed of fifteen letters, of which all but three are from the eponymous heroine to her friend and confidante, Robertine.<sup>16</sup> The fact that Robertine is a woman ensures a certain level of intimacy between the two correspondents, and this allows the reader to enter into Flavie's world, thus gaining a greater understanding of her mentality. In this way, woman's position in patriarchal society is presented from the inside, rather than from the point of view of an external, and not necessarily sympathetic, narrator. Although such a correspondence between two women is not unique in Sand's work (one thinks for example of *Jacques*), there is an important difference in the content of the letters presented in this later novel. Whereas the exchange of letters between Fernande and Clémence focuses on Jacques and Octave, and on questions of marriage and adultery, the focus here is on the heroine, the often mundane events of her life and her romanesque imaginings. In this context, the way Flavie presents her first letter assumes its full significance:

... Nous voici donc bien installés à quelques milles de Florence, et, de même qu'à Rome, je vais te faire l'historique d'une de nos journées. Tu verras mieux ainsi mon existence que sous la forme ordinaire des petits chapitres dont on oublie toujours les trois quarts. Du moins, c'est ton avis, et je m'y conforme.<sup>17</sup>

This letter is not to be an account of a particularly important event in her life, but simply of the thoughts and incidents that make up one of her days. Rather than giving a general overview, Flavie makes an effort to record these events in detail, so as to give Robertine, and hence the reader, insight into her daily routine. The fact that her correspondent is a female friend who appears to have requested that Flavie write such an account, establishes a bond which will allow for a certain candidness. Flavie thus writes naturally, and includes all sorts of information, which although insignificant for

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<sup>16</sup> The others are from Robertine to Flavie, Emilius to Malcolm and from Malcolm to his mother.

<sup>17</sup> George Sand, *Flavie* (Paris: Hachette, n.d.), p. 7. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.

the plot, provides a clear picture of the things that matter to her. Given that she is intensely aware of the conventions that weigh on any interaction between men and women within society, such openness would have been impossible with a male correspondent. She cannot, for example, be seen to speak too often to Malcolm, since this would compromise both of them, as would speaking about personal matters. In her first conversation with him, having already asked if he was a 'savant' and having obtained the reply, 'Si je l'étais . . . du moment que cela vous déplaît . . .' (p. 33), she cannot in the course of the same conversation ask if he is 'un homme *avancé*' (p. 36, italics in original). She explains:

C'était bien assez d'avoir été assez étourdie pour lui demander s'il était *savant*. Une seconde question sur lui-même, une seconde réponse de sa part comme la première, et nous n'avions plus qu'à aller demander la bénédiction de nos parents sous un arbre, en prenant le ciel et le petit abbé à témoin, ou à déclarer tout projet rompu entre nous pour cause d'incompatibilité d'humeur. (ibid., italics in original)

With a sympathetic female friend, and in the privacy of an epistolary exchange, she can be more natural and expansive than would have been the case with a male addressee. In her letters, she betrays none of the self-censorship that society imposes on her relations with men.

That is not to say that Flavie's narrative is devoid of distortions, for in the version of events she records in her letters, she tries to create a positive image of herself. In one particular scene during the excursion on horseback, recounted in her first letter, she becomes aware that she is being watched and followed by the marquise G\*\*\*, who is jealous of the attention Flavie pays to her husband. When this woman continues following her, even after Flavie has dismissed her husband, she tries to lose her, but without success:

Elle s'acharna à faire tout ce que je faisais d'imprudent pour me débarrasser d'elle [. . .] enfin, elle voulut et s'imagina partager avec moi les honneurs de l'intrépidité, le tout pour faire croire à son mari qu'elle est aussi brave que moi; et cela en pâlisant de peur à chaque minute, en grinçant les dents et fermant les yeux à chaque nouvelle folie dont je lui donnais l'exemple. (pp. 27-28)

However Malcolm gives a rather different version of events in his letter, and writes of Flavie:

Elle craint tous les dangers et tous les chevaux; mais bien plus que la pauvre marquise G\*\*\*, dont elle se moque et qui, en somme, ne fait la brave que pour éblouir son imbécile de mari: mademoiselle de K... [Flavie] est poltronne et ne pose l'audace que pour éblouir tout le monde. (pp. 149-50)

There is no doubt that Flavie relates her version of the incident in order to show herself superior to the marquise. Malcolm's version confirms this intention, and, if we accept his account of events (if not the negative gloss he places on it), this reveals that Flavie has distorted the facts in order to present a favourable image of herself. Indeed, writing in this novel links not with self-analysis, nor with the transmission of information, but with the creation of a positive self-image. Flavie's narrative thus becomes increasingly marked by the romanesque, by the retreat from, and even denial of the real of the patriarchal world so that she can adopt an illusory subject position, and logically comes to a close when she gives up her dream of the impossible to accept her 'proper' position within patriarchy.

Image is important to Flavie, for her sense of self-worth is built on the men who surround her, and on the feelings she inspires. She writes to Robertine: 'Puisque j'inspire des sentiments vifs et tenaces à tant de gens, et à toi en particulier, chère grondeuse, c'est qu'apparemment j'ai quelque valeur' (p. 12). Lady Rosemonde notes her 'désir de plaire' (p. 19), and the reader is soon aware that she is constantly surrounded by a group of adoring men. In her first letter she relates an excursion on horseback, and records the presence of 'tous mes adorateurs que j'ai retrouvés à Florence' (p. 21). She continues: 'Il y avait là lord T..., M. de S..., M. de P..., le marquis G..., le prince W..., enfin toutes les lettres de mon alphabet. . .' (ibid.). Flavie's position in this society is one that is based on a desire to be the centre of attention, the focus of the male gaze. This is precisely the position of women in the patriarchal economy, in which, according to Luce Irigaray, they are objects exchanged between male subjects. In 'Des Marchandises entre elles' she writes: 'Les échanges

qui organisent les sociétés patriarcales ont lieu, exclusivement, entre hommes. Femmes, signes, marchandises, monnaie, passent toujours d'un homme à un autre homme'.<sup>18</sup> Woman's only value is thus as object of exchange, and this value is based on '[les] besoins-désirs de sujets consommateurs-échangeurs' (p. 176). She must therefore try to 'susciter le désir des consommateurs' (p. 181), which is what Flavie tries to do by seeking to attract the attention of the men around her. Not only does this centrality of male desire incite rivalry between women, it also gives them an illusory power and subjectivity. Flavie feels that she controls her emotional destiny, as is clear when she tells Robertine of her expectations in marriage:

Je veux qu'il [mon mari] respecte [mes goûts], qu'il ne gêne aucune de mes habitudes ou de mes fantaisies, qu'il se fie aveuglément à ma parole, qui sera chose sacrée pour moi, et qu'il me laisse mener la vie qui convient à mon caractère et à mes idées. (p. 11)

Flavie expects to be able to continue to exert control in marriage, but any power she currently has in society is as an object of exchange. This will disappear when she is married, for at that point she will have been exchanged between men, appropriated by her husband and therefore removed from the market, from the place in which she exerted power. But Flavie's is not only a temporary subjectivity, it is also an illusory one, since it is essentially a passive role, dependent on the desires of the active male subject. This illusory nature is to some extent evident in the romanesque nature of Flavie's narrative, for her sense of self-importance and value is exaggerated, fictional rather than real. When, for example, she thinks she is being spied upon by Emilius, who is acting under Malcolm's instructions, she derives great pleasure at being the object of a sort of 'double' male gaze. She acknowledges that she does not want to see the mystery resolved and admits to Robertine that: 'je ne me souciais pas de voir finir sitôt le mystère qui me préoccupe, m'effraye et me divertit' (pp. 68-69). Great importance is placed on maintaining this illusion, even when there is increasing evidence that she is not the focus of Emilius's observations. However, instead of acknowledging her object status at this point, Flavie seeks actively to gain the

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<sup>18</sup> Irigaray, *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un*, p. 189.



attention Emilius prefers to devote to his studies, thus moving from the position of desired object to desiring subject and transgressing the patriarchal distribution of gender roles. In a letter to Robertine she appears to acknowledge this transgression: 'A présent il me semble que je suis dans le vrai absolu. Peut-être suis-je dans l'impossible quant aux choses de ce monde' (p. 165). As Flavie assumes the role of desiring subject, she realises that although she is being true to her feelings, she is placing herself in a position within society which is impossible for women. But in the spirit of the true romantic heroine, Flavie does not allow herself to be constrained by social conventions and pursues Emilius, eventually all but proposing marriage to him. When he refuses her proposal, this frustration of her desires leads to a period of illness, a psychological crisis, which was the inevitable consequence of the withdrawal of the recognition she desired from the social-symbolic structure. Flavie emerges from this crisis calmer and more reasonable, and in her last letter to Robertine before her marriage, she writes: 'l'imagination est calme, *le rêve de l'impossible*, ce malheureux et superbe rêve qui m'avait gagnée, s'est évanoui tout doucement' (p. 183, italics in original). She has now relinquished her illusory subjectivity, her romanesque dream of the impossible, and has adopted the 'proper' position for a woman. Having thus accepted her object position, the threat to the stability of patriarchal society posed by the woman who would attempt to move out of this role is neutralised.

*Flavie* thus reveals the limits placed on women in patriarchal society, and the forces that shape their existence. The form of the novel creates not only the conditions for understanding how the female protagonist reacts to these, but also for judging her sympathetically, if not wholly uncritically, since the text includes part of a letter from Robertine, in which she is critical, but also sympathetic towards Flavie. She knows that Flavie appreciates her 'franchise *brutale*' (p. 45, italics in original), and that she can allow herself to criticise her friend's 'légèreté' (ibid.) whilst at the same time hoping that the influence of Malcolm and his mother will make her approach love more seriously, and put away some of her 'idées excessives' (p. 44). However she also recognises Flavie's qualities, and by thus tempering her criticism, she opens up

the possibility that the image portrayed in these letters is not perhaps the whole Flavie, that the social persona which she adopts masks her true qualities. Robertine writes:

J'espère [. . .] que *tu poses un peu cette légèreté*, et qu'au fond tu te soucies du bonheur et de la vérité tout autant qu'une autre; plus, peut-être! qui sait?

Le ciel serait fort inconséquent s'il donnait à une créature tant de séductions irrésistibles, et qu'il n'eût oublié que le cœur et la raison. Cela ne se peut pas, chère et adorable fille!

Tu es bonne, tu es juste et généreuse, n'est-ce pas? Oui, tu aimeras, et tu mériteras l'amour que tu inspires, le jour où tu le partageras. (p. 44, my italics)

Robertine's hope is that Flavie's flightiness is simply part of her posturing in patriarchal society, and that not only is there a more serious side to her, but that this side will be brought out when she finds a man whose love she shares. This sympathetic side to Robertine's reply echoes remarks made earlier by Malcolm's mother, Lady Rosemonde:

Dans les premiers temps je vous craignais. Vous aviez trop de frivolité, trop de désir de plaire, trop d'éclat et d'aplomb. Je vous ai recherchée pour vous étudier. J'ai reconnu que vous aviez autant de fierté et de chasteté que les femmes les plus réservées et les plus austères. Dès lors je vous ai aimée, et toutes vos séductions m'ont gagnée. (pp. 18-19)

Together these two judgements of Flavie by other women can be seen to influence the reader towards an equally sympathetic reaction to the heroine. Whilst one may perhaps be uneasy with the patriarchal bias of these women's faith in Flavie's ability to adopt a patriarchally-defined feminine position, their lack of condemnation of that which is different is certainly positive. The same is not true of the male characters in the story. Malcolm is particularly harsh and unforgiving towards Flavie, whom he accuses of being self-centred, ignorant, silly, childish, possibly 'méchante' (p. 151), and certainly a flirt. Whilst his perspective reinforces some of the criticisms made by Robertine, it is important to be aware of the factors which have influenced his judgement. Malcolm had been in love with Flavie, and his letter to his mother appears to have been written after she had given him to understand that there was little hope of Flavie accepting his advances. By concentrating on Flavie's faults, Malcolm is able

to convince himself that she was not worthy of his love, that his love for her was not serious. He writes: 'J'ai eu un accès de folie que vous avez pris trop au sérieux' (p. 147-48). Beyond this however, his judgement of Flavie reveals a particularly masculine attitude to difference, which is most evident in his account of their first meeting:

Elle a dit là, pendant un quart d'heure, autant de paradoxes maniérés et de *non-sens* révoltants qu'il ne s'est écoulé de minutes. C'est plus que mon amour n'a pu en digérer. (pp. 151-52, italics in original)

He dislikes her inane babble and regards this as an attention-seeking tactic on her behalf. But Flavie's version of this first encounter gives a different account of her motives. She writes: 'Je me mis à babiller avec aisance sur toutes sortes de sujets plus ou moins saugrenus, afin de faire causer le timide ou prudent Malcolm' (p. 34). She does not claim that what she says has a strong intellectual content, but that its purpose was to make Malcolm speak. As has been the case in novels such as *Indiana*, Flavie as speaking woman is censured by Malcolm for not conforming to patriarchal norms of speech.

There is one further significant detail that occurs in Flavie's account of her love for Malcolm, and that is the bond she feels with his mother. It is interesting to note the importance that Flavie accords to this figure when she is first describing Malcolm, for she writes: 'Bien des choses me plaisent en *lui*. D'abord sa mère, qui est la seule belle-mère que je puisse me croire capable de supporter' (p. 9, italics in original). She later reiterates this same idea: 'jusqu'ici, Malcolm \*\*\* n'est, à mes yeux, qu'un aimable et joli garçon dont j'aime assez la figure et les manières, beaucoup le nom et la position, et encore la mère. Celle-ci, je l'aime réellement, extrêmement' (pp. 12-13). It becomes clear, however, that Lady Rosemonde's essential quality in Flavie's eyes is that she does not rival Flavie for others' attention:

Elle m'est supérieure en tout, je le reconnais; mais elle ne songe à m'éclipser en rien de ce que je me borne à être. Elle ne m'écrase pas de ses toilettes. [...] On l'admire; mais, comme elle ne pense pas à plaire, elle ne tourne la tête à personne, et, là où nous sommes ensemble, c'est de moi qu'on s'occupe; et, loin de s'y opposer, elle y concourt. (pp. 13-14)

This bond with a woman who is not a rival, who shows a concern for the other has been denied Flavie, and although she seems to value this relationship principally because she is the beneficiary of 'maternal' concern and attention, it is nevertheless clearly presented as a potentially positive bond. This is an aspect of women's identity which will be explored in greater detail in *La Confession d'une jeune fille* for the heroine of this novel will risk all to preserve the maternal bond.

Whereas *Flavie* shows how under patriarchy women cannot claim any status independent of men, and are hence maintained in the object position, *La Confession d'une jeune fille* points towards the possibility of a feminine subjectivity, that is, one not based on the patriarchal model of acceptance of the Law of the Father, but one which stresses the important relation to the mother. Lucienne's story is constructed around the uncovering of her true identity: having been placed in her grandmother's care by her father, an *émigré* who has not returned to France, Lucienne was abducted as a baby, and when she is returned to her grandmother some years later, doubts about her identity remain, for her father never acknowledges her as being the daughter he lost. It is only upon the death of her father, and the subsequent death of her grandmother, that the question of her identity becomes important, for her inheritance is disputed by her father's second wife, Lady Woodcliffe. There is no conclusive proof of Lucienne's identity, apart from the word of her grandmother's lady-in-waiting, Jennie, whose husband had been involved in the abduction, and who subsequently returned Lucienne to her grandmother. Lucienne is therefore forced by her adversary's lawyer, Mac-Allan, to relinquish her family name. However, in the course of his dealings with Lucienne, Mac-Allan falls in love with her, and when her identity has finally been established, he proposes marriage to her. But before she gives him an answer, Lucienne insists on writing the account of her life which, with Mac-Allan's reply, make up *La Confession d'une jeune fille*.

In Lucienne's 'confession', the bond to the mother-figure, be it her grandmother or Jennie (who was her adoptive mother during her abduction) is strongly felt. Early in

her narrative, she remembers the traumatic wrench she felt when separated from her adoptive mother and returned to her grandmother:

Je crois que ce fut mon premier chagrin, et je crois qu'il fut terrible, car je n'en retrouve pas la durée et les incidents. Il me semble que j'ai été morte dans ce temps-là, quoiqu'on m'ait dit que je ne fus pas même malade; mais je crois bien qu'il y eut un anéantissement dans mon âme, et comme une suspension de vie morale et intellectuelle.<sup>19</sup>

The breaking of this bond leaves Lucienne feeling shattered, even dead, as if a vital support has been removed from her existence. She later reiterates the pain of this break when she says to Jennie: 'J'aimais une mère que j'avais! On a bien tâché de me la faire oublier; mais justement la seule chose que je n'ai pas oubliée, c'est le chagrin que j'ai eu quand elle m'a laissée là avec ma grand'mère que je ne connaissais pas' (I, 143-44). It is a feeling she experiences again after the death of her grandmother:

Quand je me retrouvai seule avec Jennie, au bout de trois ou quatre jours, il ne me sembla pas que je fusse chez moi. Mon *moi*, séparé de celui de ma grand'mère, ne me représentait plus rien. (I, 291, italics in original)

Lucienne's sense of self is not based on detachment from and rivalry with the mother figure, but on union with her. The father figure has been absent from her life and has thus not intervened to break this bond, but it is a bond which must be broken in patriarchal society in order to ensure the 'proper' socialisation of woman based on her acceptance of the Law of the Father.

That an insistence on maintaining bonds with the mother precludes 'normal' (patriarchal) socialisation is established early in the novel, for when Lucienne is returned to her grandmother, she refuses to speak the language of her father's family, and speaks instead in the language or *patois* that she had spoken with her adoptive mother:

Ma grand'mère et ma nourrice [. . .] ne purent arracher de moi un seul mot de français pendant plusieurs semaines. Le français n'était pas ma

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<sup>19</sup> George Sand, *La Confession d'une jeune fille*, 2 vols (Paris, Michel Lévy, 1865), I, 12. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.

langue habituelle, et pourtant, on m'en avait appris un peu; car je paraissais le comprendre, et la facilité avec laquelle je le rappris quand ma mauvaise humeur fut passée prouva que je l'avais entendu parler presque autant que l'autre langue ou patois dont je préférais me servir. Il paraît que cette préférence était une malice de ma part. (I, 13)

Her choice of the formula 'langue ou patois' is an interesting one. In one sense, it is artificial, for when she writes her 'confession' she was certainly aware that this foreign 'language' would generally have been regarded as merely the *patois* of Jennie's native Brittany. However, by according it the title of 'langue', Lucienne makes it less a subset of the language of the Father and instead raises it to the status of an alternative language, the language of the Mother. By refusing in this way to relinquish the bond to the Mother and to speak the language of the Father, Lucienne cannot make the transition from the semiotic to the symbolic order, that is, she cannot integrate into the language system of patriarchy. She acknowledges how her refusal to accept the break with her mother isolates her from interaction with others:

J'ai un instinct confus d'avoir été méchante ainsi par douleur. Probablement je sentais dans mon cœur des griefs que je ne savais pas formuler. Je dois avoir été blessée surtout de l'abandon de celle que j'appelais intérieurement ma mère; peut-être aussi savais-je déjà exprimer mes plaintes à ce sujet, car on m'a dit que je parlais quelquefois toute seule dans cette langue que personne n'entendait. (I, 14)

An exclusive bond to the mother precludes 'normal' socialisation, and it is only when this figure is forgotten that Lucienne can become an accepted member of society. But in Lucienne's case, this transition does not involve the complete repression or exclusion of all links to the mother, for the relationship with her grandmother now becomes central. Of her gradual socialisation she writes:

Il paraît aussi que la transition entre ce caractère farouche et une humeur plus traitable fut assez lente. Enfin un beau jour, après m'avoir chérie quand même avec beaucoup de patience et de bonté, on me trouva charmante. Je ne saurais dire quel âge j'avais atteint au juste; mais j'avais absolument oublié ma langue étrangère, ma mère inconnue et le fantastique pays de ma première enfance. (I, 15)



Although Lucienne's acceptance into patriarchal society is based on the progressive severing of the links to her 'original' mother, this bond remains strong in her life and has important effects on her personality. There is a sense in which the romanesque side of Lucienne's character is the product of these severed links with her mother, for it is the uncertainty surrounding her origins which leads her to romanesque imaginings about her identity and to the recreation of 'le fantastique pays de ma première enfance' (I, 15). The romanesque constitutes the continuation of this world of the mother into the positive and rational world of the father. As in *Flavie*, the romanesque constitutes a means of escape from an unsatisfactory or alienating reality, and hence is condemned by the representatives of patriarchy within the novel. Marius, for example, says to Lucienne:

Tu es susceptible, exigeante et romanesque, surtout, oui, romanesque; c'est là ton malheur et le mien! Tu ne vois jamais les choses comme elles sont. Ton imagination les exagère ou les interprète. (II, 172)

Mac-Allan also reminds her that: 'Les choses positives sont du goût de la majorité. Les choses romanesques sont traitées par elle de folie et ne répondent qu'à l'idéal d'une imperceptible minorité' (II, 156). Lucienne, however, sees it as both a source of weakness and strength:

Le réel ne me satisfaisait pas; je cherchais quelque chose de plus étrange et de plus brillant dans la région des songes. Je suis restée ainsi: ç'a été la cause de tous mes désastres, et peut-être aussi le foyer de toutes mes forces. (I, 17-18)

Although her romanesque tendency has had some negative effects on her life (she is perhaps referring here to the problems which arose because of her imagining that Frumence was in love with her), it is also a source of strength for it is precisely this non-acceptance of the real which has given her the determination and energy to fight against those who would deprive her of her identity.

In this patriarchal society, Lucienne's identity, based on her emotional links to her grandmother, is invalid, for her civil status must be dependent on that of a man, either husband or father. The identity she clings to is the one that has been asserted by her

grandmother and by Jennie, and, after hearing Jennie's account of the abduction of the child and her subsequent return to her grandmother, Lucienne thinks of the sincerity of Jennie's words rather than their legal value:

J'en fus émue à ce point que j'en pesai à peine la valeur légale. Je ne voyais que la bonté, la sincérité, le désintéressement, la simplicité héroïque de Jennie. [. . .] Je lui jetai mes bras au cou, et je restai pleurant ainsi avec elle et oubliant tout le reste. (II, 24-25)

Whilst Lucienne is won over by Jennie's sincerity, Mac-Allan thinks only in terms of objective facts, and asserts: 'la lecture dont je viens d'être ému ne change absolument rien au jugement que j'ai porté sur l'affaire en elle-même' (II, 28).<sup>20</sup> For him, Lucienne's identity must be determined by a genealogy going back through her father, and her bonds to her grandmother cannot provide her with an identity recognised by the Law. Suddenly she is brought to the realisation that she is nothing in this society: 'J'étais sans nom, sans âge, sans famille, sans passé, sans avenir, sans protection et sans responsabilité!' (I, 310). Nevertheless, she refuses to accept the attack on her identity initiated by Lady Woodcliffe, for what matters to her is not the possible inheritance, but her identity: 'Ce qui m'inquiète un peu, c'est de bien savoir qui je suis' (I, 296). The battle between the emotional and the rational is thus engaged. It seems as if the rational is to win out when Lucienne is forced to accept Mac-Allan's offer to 'buy off' her claim to be her grandmother's rightful heiress in order to avoid a protracted legal process which could lead to her complete destitution and to the imprisonment of Jennie for complicity in the abduction. Because of the symbolic importance of the name as a sign of the bond between herself and her grandmother, Lucienne initially refuses Mac-Allan's proposal and tells him: 'je ne commettrai jamais l'insigne lâcheté de vendre ce que ma grand'mère m'a donné' (II, 97). But it is

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<sup>20</sup> There is in this context an interesting *mise-en-abyme* concerning the authority granted to those who do not speak within the conventions of the Law. The dating of Jennie's account as 'le jour de Pentecôte de l'année 1816' (II, 24) adds a significant biblical intertext to her narrative. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down on the disciples and caused them to speak in tongues. The disciples could speak in different languages and others could understand them, even though what they were hearing was not their native language. However, some accused the disciples of being drunk and refused to believe them. This choice of date carries with it the implication that the truth is not always recognised by those who do not wish to hear it, and this serves as a hint to the reader that Jennie is in fact speaking the truth.

ultimately the bond which is more important than the name, and what most upsets Lucienne in the settlement Lady Woodcliffe proposes is the demand that she leave the country. The loss of the proximity to her grandmother that this would entail alarms her:

Je ne pensais plus à cela que l'on me chassait de mon pays! Eh bien, je resterai; [ . . . ] je viendrai de temps en temps regarder en cachette cette chère maison et ce jardin, et l'arbre que ma bonne mère aimait! [ . . . ] Au lieu d'habiter son salon et de prier sur sa chaise, je planterai des fleurs dans le cimetière où elle dort, et je serai encore plus près d'elle. (II, 153-54)

Mac-Allan finally proposes a compromise whereby Lucienne agrees to relinquish her name but, by not leaving the country, renders the financial settlement offered to her invalid. In this way she can remain close to Jennie and to her grandmother's grave, and avoid relinquishing entirely the maternal genealogy that is so important to her. The ending of the novel vindicates Lucienne's fight to preserve these maternal bonds, for she is shown to be the Lucienne de Valangis who was abducted. However, there is an extra twist in her narrative, since she discovers that she is not the daughter of the so-called marquis de Valangis, but the fruit of her mother's affair with a Spanish nobleman. Knowing that the child was not his, her father arranged to have her abducted, and thus when she was returned to her grandmother, he refused to acknowledge her existence. It is thus the bond to her mother that ensures her place in this family. Although the truth about her birth diminishes the familial links to her grandmother, it is by insisting on this bond that the truth is established, her identity restored, and the testimonies of her grandmother and of Jennie vindicated. By clinging to a maternal genealogy, Lucienne rejects the alignment with the dominant father figure that forms the basis of patriarchal socialisation, and by not setting herself against the mother as the original other in the phallogentric symbolic order, she lays what may be the foundation for a new female subjectivity.

It is through writing that she affirms this identity, and this is done as much for herself as it is for Mac-Allan. In the short letter to him that precedes her account of her life, Lucienne justifies this need to write in terms of the 'sérieuse détermination à laquelle

vous me conviez' (I, 1), which, it later transpires, refers to his offer of marriage. Her account of her life is therefore presented as a need to be open to Mac-Allan, and it is suggested that it is written primarily for him: 'je veux *vous* rendre compte de ma vie et de moi-même avec la plus scrupuleuse sincérité' (ibid., my italics), a suggestion reinforced by the word 'confession' in the title. In this novel, as in *Flavie*, and also in *Malgrétout*, for women to write there appears to be a need for some sort of external pressure in order to legitimise this act, and what better way of justifying writing by a woman than by presenting it as a precursor to marriage, as a process which will create the conditions for woman's fulfilment of her proper duties, and which will stop when these duties begin? Although presented as a means of unveiling herself to a future husband, the process of writing her life also has important benefits for Lucienne's sense of herself. Isabelle Naginski stresses the importance of the narrative of confession in Sand's work, and writes:

La confession devient [. . .], dans l'œuvre sandienne, le lieu privilégié du discours analytique de soi. Forme supérieure au journal intime parce que parlée et dialoguée avec un Autre, la confession est une mise en œuvre de la polyphonie chère à l'auteur.<sup>21</sup>

The basis for the superiority of this form is presented, then, as being the implied presence of an other. Nevertheless, in the case of *La Confession d'une jeune fille*, the importance of Mac-Allan as addressee is secondary to Lucienne's need to affirm her identity, and she does not seek either approval or absolution from him. Lucienne will herself assume the roles of both confessor and confessant, as is suggested when she writes:

Je vous ai demandé trois mois de solitude et de liberté d'esprit pour classer mes souvenirs et interroger rétrospectivement ma conscience. Permettez-moi de ne prendre aucun parti, de n'avoir même aucune opinion sur l'offre que vous me faites, avant que ce travail ait été placé sous vos yeux. (I, 1)

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<sup>21</sup> Isabelle H. Naginski, 'La comédie féminine. Constance et mouvance dans l'œuvre sandienne', in *George Sand et l'écriture du roman: Actes du XI<sup>e</sup> colloque international George Sand*, ed. by Jeanne Goldin (Montreal: Paragaphes, 1996), pp. 231-39 (p. 232).

The emphasis is shifted from the addressee to Lucienne herself, and it seems that it is only by increasing her self-knowledge through writing that she will be in a position to reply to Mac-Allan's offer. There is for Lucienne a strong internal need to come to terms with her identity, since, at the time of writing, she has just learned who she is. Before she can enter marriage, she needs to be more sure of her identity as Lucienne de Valangis, of how all the pieces of her life fit together. Indeed the possibility that the principal addressee is not perhaps Mac-Allan, but Lucienne herself, is suggested again in the narrative, when she defends her inclusion of descriptions of the area around Bellombre: 'bien que la personne pour laquelle j'écris connaisse mon pays de Provence, je ne saurais *me* retracer aucun événement sans en établir le cadre' (I, 18, my italics). The 'me' is grammatically unnecessary and highlights the fact that information is not included primarily with Mac-Allan in mind, but in order to help her to situate herself within a certain *cadre* and to establish her identity. In her narrative she emphasises how the landscape of the area she inhabits has had a strong effect on her personality:

Cette Provence exerça sur moi un prestige d'écrasement intellectuel, si je puis ainsi parler, en même temps que ma personnalité, cherchant à réagir, soulevait en moi des orages sans explosion marquée. De là beaucoup de développement dans le sens de la rêverie, beaucoup de stagnation dans celui de la réflexion. (I, 40-41)

The physical setting for her narrative is necessary for understanding of events, but it is also an essential element in Lucienne's own analysis of the forces that have shaped her, for it is an important part of the identity that she is recreating and with which she is trying to come to terms.

As a result, it seems to me that the process of writing must in itself be read as fulfilling an important need for the heroine. Whilst it is true that Lucienne is aware of her origins when she begins writing, her narrative is until the end marked less by certainty about this identity than by a rather more hesitant process of analysis and understanding. I am therefore not entirely convinced by Timothy Wilkerson's argument that, 'Lucienne's writing does not have as its goal the quest for a personal

identity. [. . .] The telling of her story [. . .] takes place after the inner struggles through which she has already achieved this end'.<sup>22</sup> Lucienne's life up to this point has been characterised by a lack of certainty about her origins and she has thus been subjected to the judgements and questioning of others. In this letter, and from a position of knowledge about her origins, she can now work through these discourses and integrate them into a narrative of which she is no longer the object but the subject. As Ruth Carver Capasso argues, 'it is the process of discovering and revealing her inner identity that is significant. This process is shaped by the words of other characters'.<sup>23</sup> Alongside the reassurances of her grandmother and of Jennie that she is indeed Lucienne de Valangis, other discourses shape her sense of self. Denise, her *nourrice*, sees in her a child of the devil: 'la voilà qui grandit. Bonté de Dieu! comme ça pousse vite, l'herbe du diable' (I, 75). Mac-Allan places her whole identity in doubt when he says to her:

Mademoiselle Lucienne [. . .] hélas! vous ne vous appelez peut-être pas même Lucienne: c'était le nom de baptême de la fille du premier mariage du marquis de Valangis, et rien ne prouve, rien ne pourra peut-être jamais prouver que vous soyez cette fille. Un mystère que je crois impénétrable enveloppe votre existence. (I, 306)

By denying her the name that she thought to be hers, Mac-Allan effectively negates her status in the world, her links to her family, her whole past. Lucienne comes to share these doubts not only about her identity, but also about her value as a person. There is a particularly interesting scene in the novel, when, after becoming aware of Mac-Allan's love for her, she analyses her self-worth in front of a mirror:

- Est-ce que je suis si belle que cela? me disais-je. Où Mac-Allan a-t-il pris que je fusse belle? Frumence n'a jamais eu l'air de s'en douter, Jennie ne me l'a jamais dit, et Marius m'a dit cent fois que j'étais petite, noire, ébouriffée. [. . .]  
Pourtant il fallait bien que j'eusse quelque charme, puisqu'un homme de quarante ans en était si frappé. (II, 119)

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<sup>22</sup> Timothy Wilkerson, 'Constructing Woman as Subject: Subversive Discourse and Sexual Politics in Selected Works of George Sand' (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1992), p. 287.

<sup>23</sup> Ruth Carver Capasso, 'Female Voice in *La Confession d'une jeune fille*', *George Sand Studies*, 13 (1994), 55-62 (pp. 56-57).



In this case it is the desiring gaze of the other, reflected in the mirror, which produces self-worth. By the time of her writing, Lucienne has evolved and the approval of the other is no longer necessary. Writing itself becomes the mirror which reflects her own gaze back on herself. This allows her to analyse the events in her life, to weigh up the various discourses that have circulated around her and tried to define her, and to affirm her own sense of self. It is only with this clear sense of her identity that she can enter into marriage and relinquish the name that she had fought to retain. But at the end of the account of her life, she neither accepts nor rejects Mac-Allan's proposal, and this prolongs the fundamental ambiguity surrounding the purpose of this confession. She leaves him to decide whether, after her confession (especially her revelations about her love for Frumence) he can still love her. In one sense, then, this is a narrative of confession to a potential husband with whom the 'next move' now rests. But it is equally clear that as a result of writing her life, Lucienne is not dependent on a positive response from Mac-Allan.<sup>24</sup> She can thus write at the end of the *envoi* accompanying the narrative of her life: 'Je suis forte, je l'ai prouvé. Je ne suis pas malheureuse, je ne le serai jamais, car j'ai conquis l'estime de moi-même et la foi dans mon courage' (II, 314). It is perhaps not so much a case of not wanting to marry Mac-Allan, but of not needing to, for she has affirmed her identity without a man.<sup>25</sup> Whereas Flavie merely retells the events of her life, Lucienne uses writing as a metaphorical mirror which allows her to reflect on her life and which contributes to the construction of her identity.

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<sup>24</sup> Mac-Allan's reply is instructive as to the workings of both power and desire in patriarchal society, for it affirms the centrality of *his* desire by placing his own interpretation on her narrative. He writes: 'Lucienne, vous n'avez aimé que moi, voilà qui est dit, voilà ce qu'il faut toujours me dire à présent, et je le croirai, parce que je vous adore' (II, 315). Whilst there is clearly an element of self-delusion in his reply, it also signals a lack of openness, an unwillingness to engage fully with the other on the part of this representative of the patriarchal order. Insofar as it also bears witness to a breakdown in communication between woman and man it is reminiscent of *Jacques*.

<sup>25</sup> The ending of this novel recalls that of *Isidora*, for the question of whether the marriage takes place or not is not important. What matters is that the female protagonist has affirmed her sense of self.

In an interview with Françoise van Rossum-Guyon, Julia Kristeva suggests that women's writing is often concerned with exploration of the mother-daughter relationship and that this is linked to the preoccupation of 'reformulating love'. She writes: 'On ne s'étonnera pas alors de lire les femmes clamer un autre amour: pour une autre femme ou pour les enfants. Ce qui nous renvoie dans les régions encore obscures du narcissisme primaire ou du rapport archaïque d'une femme à sa mère (région que le christianisme a publiquement voilée ou savamment écartée)'.<sup>26</sup> *La Confession d'une jeune fille* presents a woman who fights for her identity based on the maternal bond and who then uses the process of writing to affirm the importance of this bond. Reintegrating the (M)other thus appears to be a step towards establishing a feminine subjectivity. *Malgrétout* will develop the theme of writing as a means of self-analysis and self-affirmation. It will also add a new inflection to the treatment of the maternal figure, who functions as something of a leitmotif in these fictions of female identity.

In *Malgrétout* the heroine, Sarah, also comes, through writing, to adopt the role of wife and mother, though in this case the role is freely accepted rather than forced on her. The novel is the story of the only romantic adventure in Sarah's life (her love for a musician named Abel), which is told in two letters to her friend and confidante, Mary: the first at a point when she is alone and beginning to have doubts about this love, and the second when she is about to marry Abel. Both letters are presented as being written at Mary's demand, thus shifting the impetus for writing away from Sarah and onto her addressee. The novel begins:

Ma chère Mary, puisque vous l'exigez, je vous ferai le récit fidèle de l'unique roman de ma vie. Cette vie aujourd'hui solitaire, exempte, hélas! des doux soins et des chers devoirs de la famille, me laisse de tristes loisirs pour la rédaction de cette pénible aventure, vraiment fatale pour moi, bien

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<sup>26</sup> Julia Kristeva, 'A partir de *Polylogue*', *Revue des sciences humaines*, XLIV (1977), 495-501 (p. 497).

qu'il vous plaise d'y voir pour votre amie les éléments d'un meilleur avenir.<sup>27</sup>

But writing is not considered simply as a means of transmitting information to a friend: it also provides an opportunity for self-analysis and self-understanding. This becomes clear when Sarah again refers to Mary's intentions: 'Vous croyez que l'étude d'analyse à laquelle vous me conviez apportera dans mon esprit une lumière qui fera cesser mes irrésolutions. . . Puissiez-vous avoir raison!' (ibid.). Writing as a process of dialogue, both with the self and the addressee, does not, however, immediately bring calm and determination. Although at the end of her first letter Sarah resolves to forget her love for Abel and to concentrate on what she calls her 'vrais devoirs' (p. 93) towards her family, it emerges later that writing undermined rather than reinforced this resolution. When she begins her second letter, Sarah admits that, 'après vous avoir confié mes chagrins, je me sentis plus agitée' (p. 95). We may suspect that writing has rekindled feelings for Abel which she was both beginning to doubt and trying to repress. At the end of the second letter, her feelings are very different, and she thanks Mary for forcing her to reflect on her love: 'En me forçant à me résumer, vous m'avez amenée à me rendre compte de moi-même, et vous m'avez fait un grand bien' (p. 176). Writing has caused her to think about her self, and has led her to affirm the strength of her love for Abel and thus to assume a position in society based on her own needs and desires.

The importance of writing in *Malgrétout* extends beyond its function as a tool for communication. Indeed, the novel even seems to place this function of Sarah's letters in doubt, for a comment she makes in the first letter leads one to question the dating of both letters, and hence to question the presentation of these letters as part of a correspondence. Before analysing this in detail, one must be clear about when the two letters are supposed to have been written. The first letter, dated February 1864, is apparently written at some point in the twelve months' separation from Abel that Sarah has requested in order to consider his marriage proposal, and it ends with her

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<sup>27</sup> George Sand, *Malgrétout* (Grenoble: Éditions de l'Aurore, 1992), p. 13. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.

resolving to place her duty to her family above her love for Abel. This letter is presented as having been written shortly before (and to some extent as having precipitated) Sarah's journey to Nice, which takes place five months into the twelve-month period of separation.<sup>28</sup> The absence in the second letter of both a date and the customary address to the correspondent tends to obscure the fact that we are dealing with two separate letters. The second chapter does however end with the 'signature' of the heroine, and the third begins:

Les événements inattendus dont je vous ai fait part ces jours-ci à la hâte dans de courtes lettres vous font désirer de connaître tout ce qui les a précédés dans ma vie depuis environ un an. Je vous ai promis, mon amie, qu'à mon premier loisir je reprendrais mon récit où je l'ai laissé et dans la même forme où je l'ai commencé, quelque défectueuse qu'elle puisse être. Nous allons donc revenir à l'époque où je me débattais dans la solitude contre une affection que j'avais résolu d'étouffer. (p. 95)

We have begun a new letter here, and almost a year has passed since Sarah last wrote at any length. She is no longer trying to repress her love, but is about to be married to Abel. She could not therefore, at the time of writing her first letter, have been aware of the events which she recounts in her second letter. Yet in her first letter, Sarah makes the following statement about Lady Hosborn and Mlle d'Ortosa:

Ma sœur se mit à parler de ces dames et à les railler. Si je vous rapporte ses paroles, c'est que les personnes en question, mademoiselle d'Ortosa surtout, que je ne connaissais alors que de vue, *devaient bientôt jouer un rôle important dans notre existence*. (p. 71, my italics)

It is only *after* the writing of this letter that these two characters assume any significance for the plot. Indeed, it is only after the period of solitude in which she first writes to Mary that Sarah meets and speaks to Lady Ortosa. With some justification one might view this inconsistency as a result of the speed with which Sand wrote this novel (two and a half months in all: she began writing on the 27th

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<sup>28</sup> We are made aware of the passage of this period of time during Sarah's time in Lyon when she stays in the same hotel as Abel and witnesses the lifestyle he continues to lead despite being 'engaged' to her. She writes: 'Il ne s'était encore écoulé que cinq mois, [ . . . ] et, s'il persistait à m'aimer, j'avais sept mois à attendre pour le savoir' (p. 98).

October 1869, and finished the corrected version on the 19th January 1870).<sup>29</sup> Less charitable critics may well see it as proof of the inferiority of Sand's art. I would like, however, to suggest another way of reading this 'lapse' within the context of the novel, and particularly in view of the fact that this is a female narrator. It seems to me that the inclusion of this remark signals the fictionality of this epistolary exchange, a possibility strengthened by the fact that none of Mary's letters is included in the novel. These 'letters' might therefore be written by Sarah just before her marriage to Abel as a means of coming to terms with the events of the previous year, of analysing her thoughts and emotions, and, in this way, of reaching the state of calm determination she appears to exhibit at the end of the second letter. This possibility can also explain the need for two letters rather than one, since the summing-up Sarah imposes on herself by ending the first letter at a time when she had decided to repress her feelings for Abel, is undoubtedly useful as she analyses the dramatic shift away from duty and towards love that she is undergoing at the time of writing. Read this way, her final remark about writing, quoted above, in which she realises that giving an account of her life has done her 'un grand bien' (p. 176) becomes even more significant in that it emphasises the importance of this process for her. Such an interpretation may also help to explain the remark at the beginning of the second letter when she says she intends to continue the account of her life 'dans la même forme où je l'ai commencé, quelque défectueuse qu'elle puisse être' (p. 95). Since this 'forme défectueuse' refers to the first-person, retrospective analysis of the epistolary memoir that typified the first letter, this comment again draws attention to the fact that this was the only means available to the woman who wished to understand the events of her life by writing about them. Indeed, this point retains its validity even if one considers that rather than being a 'fictitious' correspondence, these letters were simply rewritten by Sarah at a later date, for the letter form is retained in preference to an explicitly literary first-person narrative.

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<sup>29</sup> This information surrounding the composition of the novel is included in the dossiers at the back of the Aurore edition (p. 211). It is worth remembering that the completion of a novel in such a short period of time was not uncommon for Sand: *La Mare au diable* was written in four days, *La Petite Fadette* in ten.

It is this recurring theme of self-analysis through writing that I should like to consider in *Malgrétout*, for it leads Sarah to marriage by giving her the opportunity to understand and consider the various discourses of love and duty which surround her. Her two letters reflect the tension between the duty she feels towards her family and her love for Abel, a tension which she must resolve before she can successfully enter into marriage.

A number of different perceptions of love are voiced in the novel, and each of these has an effect on the heroine. The first comes from Adda, Sarah's sister, who marries Monsieur de Rémonville. The latter turns out to be an unfaithful husband, interested only in the financial advantages of marrying a rich woman. Adda is neglected in marriage, and gradually resigns herself to this. She says to her sister:

Ceux que l'on choisit, quels qu'ils soient, cessent d'être des amants dès qu'ils deviennent des maris: c'est la loi du mariage, de l'amour et de la vie. [. . .] L'amour a la durée d'une rose, ma pauvre Sarah, c'est-à-dire qu'on a un instant pour le croire éternel, et tout le reste de l'existence pour savoir qu'il est éphémère. (p. 46)

She does not conceive of love as being eternal, nor of marriage as a union which can bring happiness, since she claims that 'la passion cesse dès qu'elle est assouvie' (ibid.). But Adda's view of love is strongly conditioned by her own experience, and what she regrets in marriage is the control she exercised as the attractive and desirable woman during courtship. Her 'love' for Rémonville was built on the illusion that she would continue to be the object of such attention and thus maintain a position of 'power' within marriage. When, as a young widow, she later launches herself on the stage of high society, it is precisely with a view to reclaiming this attention. If Adda's fate in marriage represents something of a warning for Sarah of the possible misfortunes a woman faces, the other female character in the novel, Mlle d'Ortosa, stands as an equally negative role-model. This woman, as desirable as she is desiring, has created an existence in high society based on her youth and beauty. But her conception of love is coloured by this social existence, and by her need to find a place



in it. It is an ambitious type of love, actively desiring a position of power based on finding a suitable husband. She elaborates her plan to Sarah in these terms:

Je veux épouser un homme riche, beau, jeune, éperdument épris de moi, à jamais soumis à moi, et portant avec éclat dans le monde un nom très illustre. Je veux aussi qu'il ait la puissance, je veux qu'il soit roi, empereur, tout au moins héritier présomptif ou prince régnant. Tous mes soins s'appliqueront désormais à le rechercher, et, quand je l'aurai trouvé, je suis sûre de m'emparer de lui, mon éducation est faite. [. . .] J'ai l'air d'attacher une grande importance à des choses futiles, on ne se doute pas des préoccupations sérieuses qui m'absorbent, on le saura plus tard quand je serai reine, tsarine, grande-duchesse. (pp. 117-18)

Control is important in her conception of love, and any question of sentiment or emotion appears alien to her project. Such calculation leads to a feeling of rivalry and suspicion towards others, for when she has divulged the secret of her ambition, she demands Sarah's silence, because 'le premier point pour réussir, c'est que personne ne soit en garde contre vous' (p. 118). This egoistical love, centred on personal passion, ambition and control, is almost diametrically opposed to Sarah's view of love.

Reflecting on what Mlle d'Ortosa has told her, she writes:

Certes, mademoiselle d'Ortosa pouvait atteindre son but, nous vivons dans la phase des aventures, et l'histoire moderne est ouverte à toutes les ambitions. [. . .] Là où mademoiselle d'Ortosa était insensée selon moi, c'était de chercher le pouvoir, l'ascendant, *l'éclat*, comme elle disait, dans une situation matérielle quelconque. Il me semblait que le vrai pouvoir, celui qui atteint le cœur, la raison et la conscience, n'a besoin ni de trône, ni d'armée, ni d'argent. Pour l'obtenir, il n'y a qu'un travail à faire sur soi-même, chercher le beau, le vrai, et le répandre dans la mesure de ses forces. Si on n'en a que de médiocres, on ne fait qu'un peu de bien. [. . .] Avec les forces de mademoiselle d'Ortosa, on pouvait à coup sûr faire plus et mieux que moi, mais à la condition de ne pas régner comme elle l'entendait, c'est-à-dire pour satisfaire une passion personnelle. (p. 121, italics in original)

Power, material wealth and domination are central to Mlle d'Ortosa's and Adda's conceptions of love, and both wish to reverse the patriarchal power structure which places them in the inferior, dominated position. But like Flavie, they discover the illusory nature of this desire for power: Adda suffers in marriage and later is devalued in the eyes of society for flirting and seeking attention whilst neglecting her children;

Mlle d'Ortosa is rejected by the man she had pursued, and having compromised herself in this way, becomes almost an outcast in society. Sarah, on the other hand, refuses to perpetuate such relations of power, and at the same time as she criticises Mlle d'Ortosa, she distances herself from a conception of love based on domination rather than emotion.

The vision of love offered by the male characters in the novel is equally negative, despite the initial impression of Abel's love as selfless. When Abel first speaks to Sarah of his love and proposes marriage, he is impatient for her reply, and repeatedly states both his desire to be worthy of her, and the importance he places on winning her affection:

Quand j'ai su que vous étiez Sarah la généreuse, la dévouée, la grande, j'ai juré que vous seriez ma femme, et je vous avertis que je ferai tout au monde, que je consacrerai le reste de ma vie, s'il le faut, à me faire aimer de vous. (p. 60)

Such devotion, already revealed in his charity to others, appears laudable and selfless, but in fact hides a more egoistical side which claims the love of a woman as the means for self-improvement.<sup>30</sup> Abel's wishes and desires are dominant, and Sarah is made to feel guilty for not responding instantly to his demands. When she asks him for a year in which to think about his proposal of marriage, he says:

Je me soumets; mais je jure que vous avez tort! Vous me laissez retomber dans cette vie dévorante dont je voulais sortir; j'étais mûr pour cette résolution: c'était l'heure. (p. 62)

The idea that Abel's salvation from a debauched, Don Juan-esque existence depends on the love of 'un être pur, doux et fort, une vraie femme' (p. 103) is stressed by Nouville when he says to Sarah: 'Vous étiez une des deux fins prévues et acceptées par lui: vivre d'une vie enragée et finir vite, ou rencontrer un idéal et rompre brusquement, irrévocablement avec tout le reste' (ibid.). He too criticises her

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<sup>30</sup> In this respect, Abel shares certain characteristics with Laurent in *Elle et Lui*. I shall return to this similarity later.

hesitancy: 'Vous avez fait une imprudence effroyable, en croyant prendre une précaution. Avec une nature comme la sienne, il ne faut pas remettre au lendemain' (ibid.). Nouville's predictions are indeed realised, and what Sarah learns and sees of Abel's passionate life as an artist in the course of the year's separation causes her to question not only his love for her, but also whether she could love such a man. However, despite his inability to 'remain true' to her, when Abel meets Sarah again after a long absence, he calls on *her* sense of devotion:

Ma vie sans vous est comme cette abîme, tout y est mort, il n'y a pas une fleur, pas un brin d'herbe, pas un rayon. Ramenez-moi au soleil; aimez-moi, ou je n'aimerai jamais, et je mourrai sans avoir vécu. (p. 129)

Although this is a plea for help, it hides a conception of love centred on egoistical happiness and lack of concern for the other. Abel insists on the centrality of his desires and expects Sarah's devotion in spite of her commitments to her family.

In this sense Abel shares common ground with another male character, M de Rémonville, whom Sarah presents as having a completely self-centred view of love. In order to prevent Adda from being made aware of her husband's infidelity, Sarah has been paying debts amassed by Rémonville in expenditure on his mistress. When she eventually refuses to continue paying, citing her duty to her family as a reason, he alludes maliciously and even menacingly, to her love for Abel, and threatens that if she did marry this lower-class man, he would not permit her sister and nieces to see her again. Such intimidation, however, only increases her determination not to give in to his demands, and when Rémonville appears to accept this and does not renew his request, Sarah writes: 'Il supposa que je puisais dans un amour nouveau la force du bonheur égoïste' (p. 78). Sarah's assessment of Rémonville's reasoning indicates how she considers a representative of (patriarchal) society to see love as a fundamentally egoistical emotion, a state in which self-interest dominates. It is a view that Sarah rejects outright, and in the midst of her doubt about Abel's love, she writes: 'je me reprochais cette explosion subite de la personnalité qui s'appelle l'amour. [. . .] Il me paraissait démontré que l'amour était un violent et implacable égoïsme' (p. 92). Sarah distances herself from an emotion which all around her (Adda, Mlle d'Ortosa,

Rémonville and even Abel) present as being self-centred. Her own idea of love is divorced from the patriarchal economy which informs this egoistical conception of love. Hers is rather a love characterised by devotion to others, and thus constitutes the counterpole to egoism in the confrontation of concepts of love around which the novel is structured.

The question of the relation between self and other is crucial to Sarah: in the course of the novel she is torn between her love for Abel, and the strong duty and devotion she feels towards her family. She experiences her love as too self-centred, and contrary to her concern for the other. She understands this to be an expression of her maternal instinct, and motherhood is an important theme in the novel. Now this tension between the love of a man and maternal duty is a recurring theme in the nineteenth-century French novel (one thinks for instance of Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale*, Balzac's *Le Lys dans la vallée* and Zola's *Une page d'amour*). The jealousy or illness of the child generally functions as a reminder to the woman of her maternal duty, and the death of the child may serve as a punishment for the woman who gives in to passion. This theme is treated somewhat differently by Sand. In *Malgré tout* Sarah is not in fact a mother, but acts as such to her sister's children. Although there is some indication of her niece's jealousy, or rather fear, at the prospect of losing her adoptive mother, such external manifestations are essentially secondary to the conflict that Sarah experiences within herself. When her niece, also called Sarah, has a nightmare about Abel taking her 'mother' away, and cries out in her sleep: 'Je ne veux pas qu'il t'emporte! Il faut rester avec ta Sarah, toujours!' (p. 41), and when the child later falls ill, Sarah is not so much reminded of her duty, as of her unresolved inner conflict.

It is this 'maternal' sense of duty and devotion to others which makes Abel's need for love particularly appealing to Sarah, for he calls on her need to devote herself to someone. When she first reflects on her love for him, Sarah claims that her initial attraction to him was based on a feeling of maternal affection:

J'ai aimé Abel pour son regard curieux et son sourire enfantin. Je suis sûre qu'il n'y a pas eu d'autre cause à la soudaineté de mon entraînement

vers lui. Il a beau être un homme fait et robuste; la première impression que sa physionomie produit sur tout le monde, c'est qu'il a l'air d'un enfant et que son âme doit répondre à sa physionomie. Mon âme à moi a tellement contracté l'habitude de la maternité qu'elle s'est égarée dans l'amour sans perdre son pli. J'ai la certitude désormais que, si Abel a besoin d'une mère, il ne saurait rester longtemps absorbé par la tendresse, vu que la passion lui est bien plus nécessaire. Je ne saurais la lui donner, et il faut que je me résigne à être ce que je suis. (p. 93)

This maternal affection is not seen initially as a way of loving Abel, for she reasons that it would not be sufficient for him. More importantly, it appears to be an effective means of absolving herself of any feeling of guilt at having loved 'egoistically', and at the end of this first letter she hopes to seek happiness 'dans le sentiment de mes vrais devoirs' (ibid.). Gradually, however, she seems to realise that she does love Abel and that she cannot simply forget him. The crucial event here is the night she spends in Lyon, on her way to visit her father and sister in Nice. By a great coincidence, she stays in the same hotel as Abel, who is giving a concert there, and hears him in the next room speaking with another woman. This is enough to rouse her jealousy and she leaves the hotel without ever speaking to Abel. But this unexpected encounter provokes an emotional crisis of sorts, and she is forced to think again about feelings she appeared to have classified before leaving for Lyon. She later describes the effect of this crisis: 'J'essayai de me ressaisir, de me demander qui j'étais et ce que je voulais' (p. 99). In many ways this is the first time that Sarah has thought about what she wants, for her life has been characterised by self-sacrifice. To her mind, her life is inextricably linked to others, and specifically to her family. When Abel declares his love for her, she says:

Mon cœur s'est imprégné de maternité; je n'ai plus su aimer qu'en protégeant, berçant, adorant des êtres sans initiative et sans responsabilité. [. . .] Après beaucoup de tristesse et d'effroi pour ma sœur, je me suis arrangée pour être heureuse dans la solitude. C'est un travail accompli. Serais-je capable, à présent, d'en accomplir un tout opposé, de reprendre ma personnalité, ma liberté, ma vitalité en un mot, pour me jeter dans l'existence d'un nouveau venu? (p. 58)

But it must be emphasised that such sacrifice is not imposed from outside, and that it comes instead principally from within herself. Her father wishes her to marry, and



although her sister is jealous of her (a situation that is complicated by the fact that she is possibly also in love with Abel), and her niece demanding of her attention, these are not insurmountable obstacles. But Sarah cannot overcome the internal conviction that love for Abel would be incompatible with her duty to others and might in fact exclude the other, because it would be based on the centrality of her own desires. Sarah is too self-effacing, and at the end of her first letter she questions her existence and asks: 'Ne m'étais-je pas toujours sacrifiée? Avais-je vécu un seul jour pour moi-même?' (p. 92). This is not however said in a spirit of rebellion, but rather as a means of affirming such altruism as the central feature of her personality, and thus reasoning away any feelings of love as alien to her.

Although Abel is in one sense no different from the other male characters in the demands he places on Sarah's devotion to him, he is also shown to be capable of devotion in return. Through Nouville, Sarah is made aware of his charity to needy musicians, and his initial reaction after accepting a year's separation to allow her to consider his proposal is to set off on a series of concerts so that he should be capable of providing her with a secure financial future to compensate for the sacrifices she has made from her own fortune for her brother-in-law. It is this positive side that she discerns in Abel, and her hope that she can help to realise this and save him from the debauched life into which he has fallen, that combine to prevent her from repressing her feelings for him. She begins to seek a way to reconcile devotion and love:

Abel avait autre chose pour lui qu'un extérieur séduisant; il avait une grande âme, généreuse et tendre, et ce qui m'avait touchée, c'était moins son génie que ses actes de courage et de dévouement racontés par Nouville. [...] Il fallait donc savoir pardonner ses défauts et l'aimer tel qu'il était, pour lui-même et non plus pour moi, aspirer à le rendre sage pour qu'il fût heureux et non pour me donner la joie égoïste de ce triomphe. Je sentis qu'en envisageant ma situation sous ce point de vue je me calmais, parce que je rentrais dans ma nature, dans mon idéal et dans l'habitude de ma vie. (p. 107)

The final words of this passage are crucial, for by loving this way Sarah feels she is being true to her feminine nature. But such a selfless way of loving is clearly open to exploitation, as the woman submits herself to the demands and desires of the man.



Sarah is aware of these dangers, having witnessed Adda's submission and suffering in marriage. It is because she doubts Abel's constancy in love that she breaks their 'engagement' when she learns of his conduct with Mlle d'Ortosa. Towards the end of the novel she begins to wonder whether she should have forgiven him, but recognises that: 'Ce qui m'en avait empêchée, c'était la crainte qu'il me fît une vie misérable et déconsidérée' (p. 172). Yet only a few moments later she has forgotten all Abel's weaknesses and she says to him: 'Vous êtes tout désormais' (p. 175). Sarah's resistance has not simply crumbled; rather, a combination of circumstances has made it possible for her to realise the love she dreamed of, but which various factors impeded. Her sister's decision to set up home in Paris and no longer to neglect her maternal duty, has removed the family commitments that had prevented Sarah from thinking of her own needs. Equally, Adda's new existence in high society reduces the threat of her being jealous of Sarah's happiness. But on their own, these reasons are not sufficient for Sarah to love Abel, since she was not convinced that he could love her as she wanted to be loved. What has changed now is Abel himself, for he shows himself capable of overcoming his egoism and vanity to love differently and selflessly. He has given up his musical career and spent three months away from society in order to analyse his character and discover whether he was 'une bête brute esclave de ses sens' (p. 174). He emerges from this period of isolation certain of his true self:

J'ai découvert en moi l'homme doux et tendre que je savais être, mais qui m'échappait toujours, et dont je sais à présent que je peux reprendre possession absolue. (ibid.)

What is perhaps most significant here is that Abel has achieved this transformation not because of Sarah's devotion, but independently of it and in order to merit her love. The relationship he now desires will not make demands on Sarah's maternal instinct, but will allow her to devote this maternal energy to the children she hopes to bear. Sarah is finally able to separate the roles of lover and mother in her relationship with Abel, for he ceases to position himself as a child demanding her attention. She can instead look forward to a life with him in which she will be able to have children herself. It is on this positive image that Sarah's narrative ends as she looks forward to a life which corresponds to her wishes and desires, with a man capable of loving her in

a supportive rather than egoistical way. It is a life which appears to realise her need to love and to be loved differently, and one which the opportunity for analysis and reflection afforded her by writing allows her to approach with optimism and confidence.

Whilst the ending of *Malgrétout* sounds a positive and optimistic note, the resolution of the plot is nonetheless problematic on a number of levels. Although Abel, Adda and Mlle d'Ortosa are all moved away from their egoistical views of love and life, this appears to be conditional on their adoption of acceptable roles in a bourgeois, patriarchal society: Adda becomes a mother, Mlle d'Ortosa a nun and Abel gives up the unconventionality of an artistic existence for bourgeois stability. The trajectory Sarah charts may equally be read as one in which she moves from marginality in the patriarchal world as a single woman leading an apparently fulfilled life independent of a man, to assume her 'proper' role within society as a wife and mother. Indeed, one might justifiably read her narrative as one in which she attempts to resolve the two conflicting patriarchal discourses by which she, as a woman, is interpellated: these discourses would attempt to position her as either lover or mother. Furthermore, any difference she asserts within her account of her life is based on her occupation of the maternal position, whilst the female characters around her situate themselves as lovers. This is hardly a difference which could be seen as subversive, given the value attached to motherhood within the patriarchal economy. This value is eloquently expressed within the novel by Lord Hosborn, who declares his love for Sarah in these terms:

La femme que je pourrais aimer serait tout l'opposé [d'Adda]: elle serait simple, réservée, calme; elle ressemblerait à une personne que j'ai vue trois fois seulement, mais qui a présenté à mes yeux l'image du beau, du bon et du vrai. C'est une jeune fille timide de manières avec un courage moral immense, une enfant qui s'est immolée pour les autres. [. . .] Son âme est absorbée par les tendresses de la famille. [. . .] C'est donc à cette personne angélique et vraiment supérieure que je songerais, si j'avais même un faible espoir d'être encouragé. (pp. 167-68)

Sarah herself echoes this patriarchal view of motherhood as central to woman's identity, for she writes at the beginning of her second letter:

Oui, la vie de famille est nécessaire à la femme; c'est ce qui fait notre grandeur. Sans le dévouement de tous les jours et les sacrifices de tous les instants, nous ne comprenons plus notre raison d'être, nous ne savons que faire de nous. (p. 95)<sup>31</sup>

It is thus unsurprising that at the end of the novel she applauds her sister for having finally 'compris ses vrais devoirs' (p. 175) and accepted her maternal duties. Sarah herself may be seen finally to give in to patriarchal conditioning at the close of the novel, especially given that she describes the factors that led her to agree to marry Abel in these terms:

J'ai entendu dans mon âme une voix qui me criait: «Et toi aussi, il faut que tu sois une femme, une mère. Ton époux est là, tu le connais, tu l'as aimé. [. . .] D'ailleurs, ne sais-tu pas que tout le bonheur consiste à donner du bonheur à ce qu'on aime, et n'es-tu pas certaine de rendre heureux et bons les êtres adorés qui naîtront de toi?» (p. 175)

And so the novel closes on Sarah's happiness as her sister finally assumes her maternal duties, and as she is about to be married to Abel and eventually become a mother too. And is this voice that Sarah hears not simply the voice of patriarchy that has been heard throughout the novel valorising the maternal role? Plot resolution thus appears to be based on Sarah's continued self-positioning in the maternal role, but with this now brought fully into the patriarchal sphere and made dependent on a man. Following this logic, writing leads not to self-knowledge and self-affirmation, but to acceptance of the role accorded to women in patriarchy. In a sense, Sarah writes herself into marriage, and acts out the patriarchal fantasy that women will naturally choose the role of wife and mother in society. The ideology underlying this narrative thus appears less as a challenge to patriarchy than an affirmation that women achieve happiness only by accepting this 'natural' role.

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<sup>31</sup> In *La Confession d'une jeune fille* Jennie similarly argues that devotion to others is central to woman's identity. She says: 'on est femme, c'est pour aimer quelqu'un plus que soi-même, un mari s'il le mérite, et des enfants dans tous les cas' (II, 198).

This reading of the novel as a narrative of patriarchy is all the more compelling when one considers the similarities the novel presents with *Elle et Lui*. I have already noted the similarities between Abel and Laurent, in that both position themselves as children to make demands on their beloved's devotion and claim this as a means of saving them from the weaknesses in their own personalities. Both heroines are also subjected to pain and suffering as a result of their lover's infidelity. But here the similarities end, for Thérèse and Sarah plot different courses vis-à-vis their lovers at the end of these novels. Whereas Thérèse seizes the opportunity presented to her to affirm herself as an artist and a mother, and to detach her destiny from that of Laurent, Sarah does not exhibit the same strength. Suddenly deprived of the family she had devoted herself to, she appears to be left vulnerable, with a void in her life that she needs to fill. It is at this point that Abel returns after the year's separation and she almost literally falls into his arms. Thérèse marginalises herself from patriarchy, whilst Sarah not only accepts her position in the patriarchal world, but writes to affirm it.

One could elect to turn this reading of *Malgrétout* as a patriarchal narrative to feminist advantage and consider the novel as a tale both of women's subjection under patriarchy to the discourses of devotion and of their enclosure within certain roles. However, I think one can, and should, read the novel more positively, and not overstress Sarah's acceptance of the patriarchal roles of wife and mother. If one considers that she has chosen these roles rather than accepting them unquestioningly, then the perspective is immediately altered and the naturalness of these roles to some extent placed in doubt. It is not simply the centrality of male desire that brings Sarah to marriage, for she does not give in immediately to the demands of patriarchy (that she attach herself to a man), but makes this choice herself, and crucially only agrees to marry Abel when she is sure that he is worthy of her love. It is also clear that the continual self-analysis reflected in her writing means that Sarah enters into marriage in a stronger position than, for example, Flavie, whose decision to marry and choice of partner appear both impulsive and rushed. It is in writing that Sarah affirms her

identity and she at all times sets herself against the egoism and mastery of patriarchy, exemplified by both male and female characters, and instead suggests that one can love differently. Even if there is no direct challenge to the macrocosm of patriarchal society, Sarah nonetheless effects major changes to the dynamics of power and of inter-relation in her own microcosm, and these are the result of her own sense of identity.

What appears from a feminist perspective to be most problematic about Sarah's affirmation of identity and her implicit challenge to patriarchy is that both are grounded in the private sphere, to which women were in any case consigned in patriarchal society. The same is true of many other novels in Sand's *œuvre*, for her heroines are almost invariably inscribed in the private sphere. What made potential feminist heroines of these other female characters was their refusal to accept the limits placed on them in this sphere, and hence the subordinate and inferior position to which it relegated them. This desire for change appears to be lacking in these later novels, for the female protagonists seem happily to accept their role as wife and mother. Sarah and Lucienne, for example, relinquish the status of independent women for dependence on a man, and thus re-enact patriarchal models of female socialisation. Indeed, of the four heroines of the novels discussed so far in this chapter, none would incur the disapproval of the narrator of *Lettres à Marcie* for their conduct. All appear to conform to his idea of what a 'proper' woman should be, and none disrupts the 'ordre admirable' and 'ordre naturel'<sup>32</sup> of patriarchal society. The similarity between the ideology which appears to underlie these four novels and the position of Marcie's 'ami' is all the more marked when one considers his description of women's qualities:

Le cœur des femmes sera le sanctuaire de l'amour, de la mansuétude, du dévouement, de la patience, de la miséricorde. [. . .] Ce sont elles qui nous conserveront à travers les siècles les traditions de la sublime philosophie chrétienne. (p. 184)

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<sup>32</sup> Sand, *Lettres à Marcie*, p. 188.



This is a description which could easily be applied to Sarah (*Malgrétout*) and to Caroline (*Le Marquis de Villemer*); it is an ideology of womanhood which Robertine and Jennie exemplify for Flavie and Lucienne respectively; and these are qualities which all four heroines seem to accept as they are about to enter marriage. But (and the distinction is crucial), these are no longer qualities which place woman in an inferior position in an immutable patriarchal order, for these later novels not only transform the value attached to the private sphere, but also show how women's position there need not necessarily be one of subordination and inferiority. If we are to get some sense of how Sand conceived a possible future displacement of the patriarchal order, there is a need to go beyond the affirmation that her novels do not subvert the division of public and private spheres. One must instead be attentive to how she inscribes the opposition of these two spheres, and to the values attached to them. In this context, *Césarine Dietrich* constitutes an important reflection on the public role of women.

(iii) *Public Voices? 'Césarine Dietrich', 'Nanon' and 'François le Champi'*

The contrast between *Césarine Dietrich* and *Malgrétout*, which appeared only five months previously,<sup>33</sup> is particularly marked at the level of plot and characterisation, for with this novel Sand returns to the world of high society, and to a heroine who is produced in and by this society. Césarine, like Flavie and Mlle d'Ortosa, exists in and for *le monde*, and loves to dazzle and to be the object of attention in social gatherings. She too is surrounded by a number of possible suitors, and shares with Flavie an apparent incapacity for love. What distinguishes this novel from *Flavie*, however, is the reflection it contains on woman's infringement of patriarchal gender norms. Whereas the earlier novel dealt with the fate of a woman in patriarchal society, demonstrating the extent of the conditioning women undergo and the limits placed on them, *Césarine Dietrich* goes further, for it deals with a woman who attempts to transcend the traditional gender boundaries. More active than Flavie, who, it is true,

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<sup>33</sup> The final instalment of *Malgrétout* was published in the *Revue des deux mondes* on 15th March 1870. *Césarine Dietrich* ran from 15th August to 1st October of the same year.



moves gradually from the position of one who wishes to be pleasing to that of one who seeks actively to please, Césarine adopts such an active position from the outset. Her principal desire is to ensnare Paul, her governess's nephew, and make of him her husband. As her desire for Paul is frustrated and becomes caught up with a desire to dominate and control others, she moves away from the illusory feminine subjectivity to which Flavie laid claim, towards a more masculine subject position. Whereas Flavie's flirtatious nature appears at times childish and ultimately corrigible, Césarine, because of her intelligence and determination, is more calculating. Her coquetry is a means of gaining power over others and of imposing her will on all those around her, rather than simply being the object of their attention.

Césarine consistently rejects the object position to which her sex is reduced in society, and refuses to be treated as a piece of merchandise traded between two men. Faced with her father's wish to marry her to the Marquis de Rivonnière, she says to Pauline, who is both her governess and the narrator of this novel:

Veut-on que je me sacrifie et que j'aie la vertu douloureuse, héroïque? Je ne dis pas que cela soit au-dessus de mon pouvoir; mais franchement M. de Rivonnière est-il un personnage si sublime, et mon père lui a-t-il voué un tel attachement, que je doive me river à cette chaîne pour leur faire plaisir à tous deux et sacrifier ma vie, que l'on prétendait vouloir rendre si belle?<sup>34</sup>

Later, when Paul suggests that she should make good the errors of her behaviour towards Rivonnière by accepting fully her role as his wife, her initial reaction is again one of horror at the thought that she should have to do something that runs contrary to her wishes and to her sense of self. She says: 'Ce que vous pensez est odieux: une femme ne doit pas se respecter, elle doit se donner sans amour comme une esclave vendue?' (p. 296). Paul's reply is instructive of patriarchal gender ideology: 'Non, jamais; mais si elle est noblement femme, si elle a du cœur, si elle plaint le malheur qu'elle a volontairement causé, elle fait entrer l'amour dans la pitié' (ibid.). Césarine

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<sup>34</sup> George Sand, *Césarine Dietrich* in *Œuvres complètes* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1979), IV, 62. All further references are to this edition and volume, and will be given after quotations in the text.

is reminded of her duty as a woman to love and to care for others, and is called upon to submit herself to the gender codes of patriarchal society. It is only at the end of the novel when she appears to accept her role as devoted wife to Rivonnière that she earns the respect of those around her and of society as a whole:

On la proposait pour modèle à toutes les jeunes femmes. Elle réparait les allures éventées de sa jeunesse et l'excès de son indépendance par une soumission au devoir et par une bonté sérieuse qui en prenaient d'autant plus d'éclat. (p. 312)

Submission and duty are held up at the end as admirable feminine characteristics, and Césarine's acceptance of woman's 'proper' role in society ensures the stability of the social hierarchy against which she had revolted.

What is, however, peculiar about Césarine's revolt, is the fact that she seeks not to change the social hierarchy, but to reverse it. Césarine does not disengage herself from the social structure in which she lives, but works within it, and lays claim to a masculine position of dominance and control as the means of escaping reduction to the status of powerless object. Nicole Mozet emphasises the intensity of this will to power: 'la volonté de puissance est omniprésente, avec une assimilation complète de la coquetterie féminine et du despotisme [ . . . ] le désir de dominer est l'unique motivation de ses moindres actions'.<sup>35</sup> However, such a transgression of patriarchal gender categories is not only unsustainable (as the resolution of the plot makes clear), but also, I would suggest, presented as undesirable.

What makes the usurpation of the masculine role in society by women unacceptable is simply that the underlying power structure of society is unchanged, for the basic relation of the powerful dominating the powerless is continued, with women occupying the dominant position. Furthermore, this reversal is achieved at the cost of repressing feminine qualities and seeking to adopt masculine characteristics. In this schema, neither the supremacy of the masculine, nor the fundamental nature of society

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<sup>35</sup> Nicole Mozet, 'Coquetterie et pouvoir dans les romans sandiens du Second Empire', *Revue des sciences humaines*, 226 (1992), 193-209 (pp. 194-95).

is challenged. If Césarine's 'defeat' at the end of the novel represents the patriarchal sanctioning of the desiring woman, any 'victory' she might have attained would scarcely have been more acceptable from the feminist perspective implicit in these novels, for Césarine makes no secret of her alignment with a masculine position. In one of her first conversations with Pauline, she affirms her desire to dominate in society:

Il faut que je sois de force à y briller aussi. J'y ai trôné pour mes beaux yeux sur ma petite chaise d'enfant gâtée. Devenue maîtresse de la maison, il faudra que je réponde à d'autres exigences, que j'aie de l'instruction, un langage attrayant, des talents solides, et, ce qui me manque le plus jusqu'à présent, des opinions arrêtées. [. . .] Ma mère se contentait d'être une femme charmante, mais je crois que j'aurai un rôle plus difficile à remplir que celui de montrer les plus beaux diamants, les plus belles robes et les plus belles épaules. Il faut que je montre le plus noble esprit et le plus remarquable caractère. (p. 41)

By marking her distance from the strategies employed by her mother, Césarine also enunciates one of the primary differences between herself and Flavie. Whereas Flavie sought attention in the accepted feminine fashion by concentrating on her appearance and her wardrobe, Césarine wishes to be judged by the more masculine criteria of mind and character. Her remarks on women reinforce this identification with the powerful, masculine position:

Je trouve l'amitié des hommes plus sincère et plus noble que celle des femmes, et, comme ils y mêlent toujours quelque prétention de plaire, si on les éloigne, on se trouve seule avec les personnes du sexe enchanteur, jaloux et perfide, à qui l'on ne peut se fier. (p. 60)<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> These remarks recall those of Sand herself, who writes in a chapter of *Histoire de ma vie* devoted to Marie Dorval: 'A très peu d'exceptions près, je ne supporte pas longtemps la société des femmes; non pas que je les sente inférieures à moi par l'intelligence; j'en consomme si peu dans le commerce habituel de la vie [. . .]; mais la femme est, en général, un être nerveux et inquiet, qui me communique, en dépit de moi-même, son trouble éternel à propos de tout. [. . .] J'aime donc mieux les hommes que les femmes' (*Œuvres autobiographiques*, ed. by Georges Lubin, 2 vols (Paris: Pléiade, 1970), II, 223-24). She continues by acknowledging her 'préférence pour la corde plus franche et plus pleine que les hommes font vibrer dans mon esprit' (p. 224). Despite the obvious similarities, Sand's preference for the company of men is based not on their flattering of her vanity and her sense of rivalry with other women, but on a dislike for women's excessive and artificial exaggeration of certain feminine traits.

In Césarine's eyes, other women exist only as rivals for men's affection and approval, and she thus feels no solidarity with her sex. As obstacles to her desires, they are entirely expendable, as is evident in her attitude to Marguerite, Paul's mistress and future wife. Convinced that she, Césarine, is the only woman suitable to be Paul's wife, she accords no importance to Marguerite's existence or feelings:

Marguerite pleurera et crierait peut-être même un peu, cela ne m'effrayerait pas. Je me charge d'elle; c'est une enfant un peu sauvage et très-faible. Dans un an d'ici elle me bénira, et Paul, mon mari, sera le plus heureux des hommes. (p. 150)

Indeed, at one point she uses Marguerite as a pawn in her power game, seeking to win her affection both as a means of discovering what is happening in Paul's household and of overcoming his prejudices towards her. As in the patriarchal schema, the other exists for Césarine only as an object to control. What is however interesting is that she has already condemned the kind of male behaviour that she increasingly adopting herself. Faced with Pauline's criticism that she is not sufficiently feminine in her behaviour and not enough of a man to behave the way she does, she replies:

Eh bien! [. . .] je tâcherai d'être homme tout à fait. Je vais mener la vie de garçon, chasser, crever des chevaux, m'intéresser aux écuries et à la politique, traiter les hommes comme des camarades, les femmes comme des enfants, ne pas me soucier de relever la gloire de mon sexe, rire de tout, me faire remarquer, ne m'intéresser à rien et à personne. Voilà les hommes de mon temps; je veux savoir si leur stupidité les rend heureux! (p.117)

This is in many respects an accurate, if hardly flattering, description of Césarine's own behaviour towards the end of the novel, and although she criticises men for treating women like children, this is precisely what she herself does with Marguerite (cf. p. 150, quoted above). The final image of her in the novel as an amazon on horseback accompanied by Valbonne, one of her husband's closest friends, and trampling Paul underhoof, suggests a continued identification with the masculine.

Césarine's own, unwitting indictment of her position is reinforced at the level of the plot in a scene between herself and Rivonnière towards the end of the novel. Insofar as it constitutes a reversal of masculine and feminine positions, it speaks eloquently of the continued inequities of the social structure and of the need for a more fundamental change in society. In this scene, Rivonnière comes to tell Césarine how he has suffered in love:

Vous n'avez jamais connu l'amour et ne le connaîtrez jamais, c'est pourquoi vous ne vous êtes pas doutée de la violence du mien. Vous n'avez jamais cru qu'on en pût devenir fou; vous avez toujours raillé mes plaintes et mes transports. C'est assez souffrir, vous ne me ferez plus de mal. Puissiez-vous oublier celui que vous m'avez fait et n'en jamais apprécier l'étendue, car vous auriez trop de remords! [. . .] Si j'étais vindicatif, je serais content de penser que votre passion du moment est de réduire un autre homme que vous ne réduirez pas. [. . .] Vous souffrirez dans votre orgueil, car il est plus fort de sa vertu que vous de votre ambition; mais je ne suis pas inquiet de votre avenir; vous chercherez d'autres victimes, et vous en trouverez. D'ailleurs ceux qui n'aiment pas résistent à toutes les déceptions. Soyez donc heureuse à votre manière; moi, je vais oublier la funeste passion qui a troublé ma raison et avili mon existence. (pp. 293-94)

Rivonnière's words sound almost out of place in the mouth of a man, in that they are more like the plaintive cry of the desperate woman, of an Indiana or an Emma Bovary, used and then abandoned by an inconstant male lover. By instead making this the speech of a male character, Sand indicates that it is not sufficient for women to seek power in patriarchal society in order to overcome the inequities of the current order, for power can only be gained by an abjuration of feminine, and an internalisation of masculine characteristics. Any woman who succeeds under these conditions will be bound to continue the faults and inequities of a system, which will itself remain fundamentally unchanged. The contrast this novel offers with others written in the same period would appear to reinforce the impression that, for Sand, there must be a fundamental change in society if women's position is to be improved, and the current patriarchal system based on power and domination is not to be perpetuated.



If Césarine embodies a rejection of the feminine, it is Marguerite who exemplifies feminine qualities in this novel. However, she is effectively silenced and disempowered for much of the action, and lacks control over her own destiny. Marguerite represents a normative, patriarchal femininity, though her capacity for love and devotion can be viewed as positive characteristics. She regards them as her only qualities: 'j'ai quelque chose pour moi, c'est que j'aime comme les autres n'aiment pas' (p. 145). These qualities are finally recognised when Pauline acknowledges that 'elle ne s'était pas vantée en disant que, si elle était la plus simple et la plus ignorante de nous tous, elle était la plus aimante et la plus dévouée' (p. 315). But these qualities are recognised and praised only at the close of the novel, and are opposed to Césarine's behaviour in a way which reflects patriarchal ideology. Marguerite represents its ideal type of femininity, submissive and loving, and is not necessarily to be viewed positively. She lacks a sense of identity independent of a man, and thus, as opposed to *Malgrétout* and *La Confession d'une jeune fille*, there is no possibility of loving 'differently' here. Marguerite is plainly in the position of the woman as object, and is exploited in the patriarchal system: first seduced by Rivonnière, and then taken by Paul as his mistress and made entirely dependent on him. Given this, the choice of name for this character cannot be coincidental. Just as Césarine's name is described by Mozet as 'avocat' in its imperialist connotations, so too the name Marguerite recalls the female character in the Faust myth (Margarethe or its diminutive, Gretchen). There is in fact a reference to this intertext within the novel when Césarine is described as playing the role of Mephisto. Pauline writes:

En la [Marguerite] promenant ainsi, elle [Césarine] échappait à mon contrôle, elle l'accaparait, elle la grisait, elle faisait reluire l'or et les bijoux devant elle, elle jouait le rôle de Mephisto auprès de cette Marguerite, aussi femme que celle de la légende. (p. 175)

There are indeed a number of similarities between the two characters: both are seduced by older men who were not really in love with them; both are enticed by gifts of jewellery; both are daughters of rather strict widowed mothers; finally, whereas

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<sup>37</sup> Mozet, 'Coquetterie et pouvoir', p. 195.



Gretchen drowns her baby, Marguerite tries to drown herself. In Goethe's *Faust* it is Gretchen who intercedes for Faust's soul at the end of the play, thus ensuring that his soul is saved from Mephisto's claims and conveyed towards heaven, and this aspect of the Faustian intertext has a bearing on our interpretation of Marguerite's character. In Goethe's version of the myth, as Christoph Schweitzer argues, Faust's redemption is 'provided by the feminine principle, specifically by Gretchen and her selfless love for him'.<sup>38</sup> Sand, I think, avoids such glorification of Marguerite's devotion in this novel, since it is clearly portrayed as being in the service of patriarchy. Paul voices the patriarchal view of women to which Marguerite corresponds: 'Pour moi, le charme de la femme n'est pas dans le développement extraordinaire de sa volonté, au contraire il est dans l'abandon tendre et généreux de sa force' (p. 170). Sand does not, despite appearances, subscribe to the myth of an 'eternal feminine' offering redemption and devotion to a man. Her positive heroines are not weak and suffering in the way that Marguerite is. This 'different' occupation of the private sphere is of central importance in understanding how Sand tries to move beyond patriarchy in these novels.

In *Césarine Dietrich* neither female protagonist embodies femininity as a force for change, and both are inscribed within the patriarchal. It is in this novel that the repression of the feminine finds its most eloquent expression: the status accorded to Paul and Marguerite's child as 'fils de mère inconnue' (p. 147). The incongruity of such a description is striking, but it encapsulates the marginalisation of the mother and the centrality of the father in patriarchal society, the breaking of maternal influence and the repression of the feminine in society. *Césarine Dietrich* speaks not only of the perversity of a woman who attempts to adopt a masculine position, but also of the perversity of a society which values only the masculine, and reduces the feminine to an inferior, marginal and subordinate position.

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<sup>38</sup> Christoph E. Schweitzer, 'Gretchen and the feminine in Goethe's *Faust*', in *Interpreting Goethe's 'Faust' Today*, ed. by Janet K. Brown, Meredith Lee and Thomas P. Saine (Drawer, Columbia: Camden House, 1994), pp. 133-41 (p.137).

Césarine, Marguerite, Flavie, Robertine and Mlle d'Ortosa represent in their different ways the choices facing women within patriarchal society: that of being *like* men (active, masculine, dominating) on the one hand, and of being *for* men (passive, devoted, submissive) on the other. These are precisely the two poles that Sand mentions in her 1848 letter to the 'Membres du Comité Central'. She writes: 'Il n'y a plus guère de milieu pour elle [la femme] entre un esclavage qui l'exaspère et une tyrannie qui avilit son époux'.<sup>39</sup> It is with these parameters of femininity in mind that the importance attached to the private sphere in these novels must be situated, for we are dealing here with a valorisation of the private, and of the feminine as a force for change. The feminine in these novels is characterised as a range of characteristics, generally, though not exclusively associated with the female characters, but at all times opposed to the dominant values of patriarchal society. These feminine characteristics are structured around both an openness to, and a concern for, the other which oppose 'masculine' relations built on domination and exclusion, and also around self-respect. Love and devotion are hence valued, though there is at all times the need to avoid being exploited and to avoid identification with patriarchal models of femininity. This occupation of the private, traditionally feminine sphere, sets out to move beyond the oppositions and hierarchies of patriarchy. As a positive tactic, it comes close to what Naomi Schor describes as the third meaning of Irigarayan mimesis: 'Mimesis comes to signify difference as positivity, a joyful reappropriation of the attributes of the other that is not in any way to be confused with a mere reversal of the existing phallogentric distribution of power'.<sup>40</sup>

This valorisation of the private should not however be read as advocating women's complete exclusion from the public. What appears to be important in Sand's eyes is that women should not enter the public and political arena by adopting a masculine position. As I have already shown in my analysis of *Lettres à Marcie*, that Sand saw this issue as problematic is clear from her letter to the 'Membres du Comité Central', in which she asks:

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<sup>39</sup> Sand, *Correspondance*, VIII (1971), 404-05.

<sup>40</sup> Naomi Schor, 'This Essentialism Which Is Not One', *differences*, 1.2 (1989), 38-58 (p. 48).

Les femmes doivent-elles participer un jour à la vie politique? Oui, un jour, je le crois avec vous, mais ce jour est-il proche? Non, je ne le crois pas, et pour que la condition des femmes soit ainsi transformée, il faut que la société soit transformée radicalement.<sup>41</sup>

This transformation is, she argues, to be effected through reform of the marriage laws: 'Il consiste simplement à rendre à la femme les droits civils que le mariage seul lui enlève, que le célibat seul lui conserve' (p. 402). She currently sees it as impossible for women to participate in the political sphere, when they depend on their husbands for social recognition and are thus 'la moitié d'un homme' (p. 407). Whilst this appears as a reasonable analysis of women's status in society, what has most troubled feminist critics about this letter are the following comments on women's 'proper' role:

Votre maison brûle, votre foyer domestique est en péril et vous voulez aller vous exposer aux railleries et aux affronts publics, quand il s'agirait de défendre votre intérieur et d'y relever vos pénates outragés? (p. 407)

Given that in this same letter Sand advocates political discussion by women and highlights the iniquity of laws which deprive them of their independence, one is scarcely justified in reading this as evidence of the author's support for the patriarchal order. One can however argue, based on this letter and in the context of these late novels, that Sand wanted women to take their duties seriously, not to try to be like men, but instead to seek to raise their status and to affirm their identity *as women*. It is in this sense that the private becomes important, and is valorised as what Naomi Schor calls 'une réserve de valeurs morales autres et supérieures',<sup>42</sup> and what Cixous terms their 'jardin secret'.<sup>43</sup> The private is the locus of the feminine in society, which also becomes a site of opposition to the patriarchal order. Schor argues in this same article that: 'Pour Sand la séparation des sphères est sacrée, inscrite dans la nature, et doit être maintenue, car l'ordre social en dépend' (p. 31). In many respects she is clearly correct, and the novels I have discussed thus far would not contradict this assertion. However, I think there is a need to nuance this observation slightly. Not

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<sup>41</sup> Sand, *Correspondance*, VIII (1971), 401.

<sup>42</sup> Schor, 'Le féminisme et George Sand', p. 34.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted by Schor, p. 34.

all Sand's heroines are excluded from the public sphere, and not all participate there as men. In certain of Sand's utopian novels, the separation of public and private is to some extent subverted. In *Nanon* for example, Sand appears to reflect on how women might achieve some sort of positive engagement in the public sphere, and in this novel the boundaries separating public and private undergo a positive and productive 'blurring'.

In Sand's work, Nanon is perhaps the female character whose engagement in the public, even political world is the most complete, but she is at the same time a heroine who does not relinquish her femininity. Towards the end of her narrative, she affirms her identity as a 'paysanne', and declares that, 'J'ai mon orgueil de race aussi, moi!'.<sup>44</sup> This affirmation is motivated by her future sister-in-law's attachment to her own aristocratic origins, and refers essentially to her class roots. But Nanon's identity is shaped as much by her gender as by her class, for she is characterised by the *amour autre* which this chapter posits as the feminine alternative to the patriarchal practice of love, which is egoistical and based on domination of the other. Louise, the female character who perhaps loves most egoistically, admires Nanon's capacity to love others, and says to her: 'Tu soignes tout ce qui n'est pas toi [. . .] aimer est ta religion' (pp. 210-11). This need to love others has shaped her identity since childhood, for she writes of her feelings when her uncle buys her a sheep:

Ce qu'il y a de sûr, c'est que j'étais née pour soigner, c'est-à-dire pour servir et protéger quelqu'un, quelque chose, ne fût-ce qu'un pauvre animal, et que je commençais ma vie par le souci d'un autre être que moi-même. (p. 34)

Nanon equates the wakening of her intelligence, of her sense of self, with the arrival in her life of something that requires her devotion. This is a particularly feminine identity, and indeed she refers, albeit with some hesitation, to her duty towards this sheep as 'une maternité' (ibid.).

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<sup>44</sup> George Sand, *Nanon* (Meylan: Éditions de l'Aurore, 1987), p. 271. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.

It is on this feminine *amour autre* that Nanon's relationship with Émilien is grounded. In a sense, she devotes herself to him, for when she buys Le Moutier and its estate from Costejoux, it is with the intention of giving it to Émilien. Her plan to become rich is undertaken to ensure him a comfortable existence, which also becomes a means of ensuring their future life together. Just as he has undertaken to prove himself worthy of her by becoming a soldier, so she wishes to become worthy of him by assuring their future material well-being, and that of those close to them. The equal effort that they put into their relationship ensures that they form the ideal couple at the end of the narrative, and Nanon asserts this to be at the basis of their union:

Si vous avez gagné le repos de votre conscience et la juste estime de vous-même en souffrant beaucoup pour votre pays et pour sa liberté, moi, j'ai acquis les mêmes joies intérieures en faisant tout ce qui m'était possible pour vous et pour votre liberté personnelle. (p. 227)

What Nanon does not make clear however is that Émilien, by fighting in the Republican army, has expiated his noble birth, and he has done this in order to merit her respect and overcome the class obstacles to their eventual marriage. The equality, love and mutual devotion of the two partners in this couple contrast with the fight for control and influence that characterises Costejoux's marriage to Louise, who still clings to the prejudices of the nobility. Such social relations have no place in the new world that Émilien and Nanon look towards and seek to create, for in this novel the personal and private already have a political and social dimension.

Nanon's love is not simply directed towards one man and thus contained in the private sphere. Although the above quotation, by opposing Émilien's devotion to his country and Nanon's devotion to Émilien, seems to leave intact the distinction public-private, masculine-feminine, Nanon engages actively in the public and even political arena, though she regards these incursions as only temporary, her true place being in the private. Each of the two major events in which she is involved has a public dimension: the freeing of Émilien from prison, and her founding of the community of Le Moutier. But this engagement with the public sphere seems at least to some extent to involve alignment, if not identification with a masculine position. In order to free

Émilien, Nanon is forced to dress as a young boy and she admits that this has an effect on her character: 'j'étais devenue, depuis que j'étais garçon, adroite et forte de mes mains pour les ouvrages de garçon' (p. 146). Later when she is involved in the running of Le Moutier, she behaves in many ways like a patriarchal capitalist seeking to augment her wealth. Costejoux even alludes to this 'masculine' side to her character when, after concluding the sale of Le Moutier to Nanon, he compares her to Louise and says: 'Vous n'êtes ni une femme ni un homme, vous êtes l'un et l'autre avec les meilleures qualités des deux sexes' (p. 188). Nanon is seen by Costejoux as less emotional than Louise, and hence, according to his ideas on the two sexes, less feminine. Yet Nanon's identity is profoundly marked by the feminine, and even in the public sphere, her feminine identity is not repressed. When she engages in political discussion with Costejoux, her point of view reflects her feminine identity. She says to him:

Si on eût fait la Révolution sans se détester les uns les autres, elle aurait réussi. [ . . . ] Vous l'auriez fait durer si vous n'aviez pas permis les persécutions et tout ce qui a troublé la conscience des simples. Vous avez cru qu'il le fallait. Eh bien, vous vous êtes trompés, et à présent que vous le sentez, vous tâchez de vous en consoler en disant que l'indulgence eût tout perdu. Vous n'en savez rien, puisque vous n'en avez point essayé.  
(p. 190)

In her opposition of indulgence to domination, concern to violence, Nanon shares the feminine perspective of other heroines in this chapter. Even if participation in the public sphere occasionally obliges her to adopt the mask of the masculine, she preserves her feminine identity behind it.

Nanon's engagement with the public sphere from a feminine position is most evident in her founding of the community of Le Moutier. She is the driving force behind this community, and, at the same time as putting order into the running of its affairs, she does not think exclusively in terms of profits, but also helps the poor. Her approach to business may appear particularly capitalist in that she discusses the way she built up her wealth and made 'des profits réels' (p. 184), but hers is a caring capitalism which does not exclude 'l'aumône' (p. 182). Le Moutier is a community based on devotion,



for it demonstrates Nanon's willingness to help others, and in particular her love for Émilien. Just before his return from the army, when she has not heard from him for some months and as she is beginning to wonder whether he is still alive, she realises that without him her project lacks meaning:

Je m'aperçus, dans ma douleur, de ce fait que j'aimais la vie et les choses de ce monde, non pour moi seule, mais pour l'objet de mon affection, et que je n'étais pas capable de me contenter de l'espérance du ciel avant d'avoir accompli ma tâche sur la terre. (p. 220)

She is caught here between her devotion to Émilien, and the wider social implications of her project, for other people's lives are also bound up in this. Love of the other is linked to love of others, and at the base of this new community lies the ideal couple that Émilien and Nanon represent, the different relations between self and other that they exemplify. In this sense, the private relationship of this couple opens out onto new inter-personal relations at a social level, and the community of Le Moutier offers an example of the kind of para-patriarchal order of which other of Sand's heroines dream. *Nanon* thus links back to the repressed feminine discourse of *Indiana*, and relocates the community of Bernica in France.

It is important to be aware of the distinctions between the community created at Le Moutier and its obvious literary intertext, that is, the 'utopian' community at Clarens in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Although Nanon's presentation of Le Moutier is less detailed than Saint-Preux's description of Clarens, one pivotal difference is nevertheless apparent: whereas Clarens is founded on the power hierarchy of master-servant, this is absent from Le Moutier. Nanon herself moves from an initial position akin to that of a servant (she is to be Louise's governess as well as assisting la Mariotte in her role of house-keeper), to become firstly the owner of Le Moutier, and then Marquise de Franqueville when she marries Émilien. This fluidity of social rank is absent in Clarens, as evidenced by Saint-Preux's concluding comments in his letter to Milord Edouard on the organisation of the workers:

Il n'y a jamais ni mauvaise humeur ni mutinerie dans l'obéissance, parce qu'il n'y a ni hauteur ni caprice dans le commandement, qu'on n'exige

rien qui ne soit raisonnable et utile, et qu'on respecte assez la dignité de l'homme, quoique dans la *servitude*, pour ne l'occuper qu'à des choses qui ne l'avilissent point.<sup>45</sup>

As reasonable as this may appear, the underlying structure remains one of power, control and domination, the servants having been conditioned to accept orders without perceiving them as such: 'Comment contenir des domestiques [. . .] autrement que par la contrainte et la gêne? Tout l'art du maître est de cacher cette gêne sous le voile du plaisir ou de l'intérêt, en sorte qu'ils pensent vouloir tout ce qu'on les oblige de faire' (p. 339). This 'society' is distinguished from a republic, for 'dans la république on retient les citoyens par des mœurs, des principes, de la vertu' (ibid.). Nanon's community, on the other hand, is based on republican principles of equality, and the final image we as readers have of it is one characterised by cross-class marriage - Nanon's cousin Pierre, a peasant, marries one of 'les demoiselles de Franqueville' (p. 236) - and cross-class association, since Le Moutier becomes a meeting place for '[des] visiteurs et [des] amis de tout rang, depuis les nobles parents des filles de M. Costejoux, descendantes des Franqueville par leur mère, jusqu'aux arrière-petits-fils de Jean Lepic, le grand-oncle de Nanon' (ibid.).

The community of Le Moutier thus testifies to the productive transgression in *Nanon* of both the separation of public and private spheres and of hierarchies of power and social class. I would suggest that the essential precondition for this undermining of social order is the revolutionary backdrop of the novel. Nanon's association with the Revolution is symbolised early in the novel when she is placed in a central position on the 'autel de la pauvreté reconnaissante' (p. 67) during the 'fête de la Fédération' (p. 66) on the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. Margaret Cohen argues that the Revolution is absent from realist novels in France between 1830 and 1848 because these are concerned with unity and stability, whereas revolution is fundamentally destabilising. She writes: 'Illegible, contradictory, and transgressive of multiple social orders, the Revolution's history is too unsettling to serve this ideological project that

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<sup>45</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (Paris: Flammarion, 1967), p. 352, my italics.

the realist novel takes as its task'.<sup>46</sup> At various points in Sand's novel, the confusion into which the revolution throws society is stressed, as Nanon speaks of 'l'anarchie des campagnes' (p. 146) and 'la poste, qui était en désarroi comme toutes choses' (p. 219). The destabilising of society during the Revolution may be seen as the essential precondition for the freeing of Nanon's energy. The only marginal presence of a confused social structure means that Nanon is given a freedom to act and to move that would not otherwise be hers. Not only does the actual historical reality of the French Revolution make it possible for Nanon to buy Le Moutier, but the destabilising of the social structure allows for the outburst of feminine energy that the community created here symbolises. This freeing of the feminine is thematised at the level of narrative discourse in the continual play between the words 'propre', 'amour propre' and 'propriété'. Nanon is obsessed with cleanliness throughout the story, and it is this feminine quality which earns her the compliments of her neighbour, la Mariotte, and leads to the awakening of her sense of self-esteem: 'Le sentiment de l'amour propre s'éveilla en moi et il me sembla que j'étais plus grande que la veille de toute la tête' (p. 33). This sense of self-esteem, or self-worth, will be reinforced by the arrival of the ewe she is to take care of, her first possession:

Dès ce moment, je sentis que j'étais quelqu'un. Je distinguai ma personne de celle des autres. J'avais une occupation, un devoir, une responsabilité, *une propriété*, un but, dirai-je une maternité, à propos d'un mouton? (p. 34, italics mine)

Ownership leads to a sense of subjectivity, but this is a feminine subjectivity, based around caring for others and duty, a maternal sentiment (this is the only instance in the novel of this word being used to describe Nanon's devotion, and here she uses it tentatively). Nanon will eventually become 'propriétaire' (p. 217) of Le Moutier, a 'propriété' (p. 182) which had previously belonged to the Church. Private and feminine 'propreté' thus gives way to 'propriété', but one which is transformed from a symbol of feudal and patriarchal order into an egalitarian community.

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<sup>46</sup> Margaret Cohen, 'Mad Sisters, Red Mothers, Wise Grandmothers: Women's Non-Realist Representations of 1789', in *Literate Women and the French Revolution of 1789*, ed. by Catherine R. Montford (Birmingham, Alabama: Summa Publications, 1994), pp. 283-96 (p. 285).

However, Nanon's participation in the public sphere is a temporary one, and she returns to her 'proper' role at the end of the novel. Having created the conditions for the survival of the community at Le Moutier, and having overcome social obstacles to her union with Émilien, Nanon in marriage seems to retreat into the submissive position of wife and mother. This impression is reinforced when she writes of her silence during political discussions between Émilien and Costejoux:

Moi qui, depuis bien longtemps, ne m'occupe plus de politique - je n'en ai pas le temps - je ne les ai jamais contredits, et, si j'eusse été sûre d'avoir raison contre eux, je n'aurais pas eu le courage de le leur dire, tant j'admira la trempe de ces caractères du passé. (p. 235)

This silence is surprising of a woman who had previously taken such interest in discussing these matters with Émilien, and who had so effectively challenged Costejoux's view that the end result of 'la Terreur' would justify the barbarism that characterised it. On one level, narrative closure is again shown to depend on silencing or repression of feminine energy or desire, and here this is made explicit by the presence of a third-person, male narrator at the end. But on another level, Nanon's retreat to the private sphere at the end of the novel reflects the historical reality of women's participation in the events of the Revolution. Whilst many women (particularly in Paris) were politically active in the early days of the Revolution (one thinks of the march to Versailles in October 1789 and the political clubs which women formed), the leaders of Revolution could hardly be said to have been favourable to women's rights. The guillotining of Olympe de Gouges, author of the *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne*, in 1793, the outlawing of women's political clubs in 1793 and the decree of 4 prairial 1795 that 'toutes les femmes se retireront, jusqu'autrement soit ordonné, dans leurs domiciles respectifs'<sup>47</sup> bear ample witness to the reactionary, anti-feminist elements within the revolutionary movement. Whilst Nanon's fate clearly conforms to that of women in the Revolution, her retreat to the private sphere is not presented in the novel as being forced upon her. Rather she

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<sup>47</sup> Olwen H. Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), p. 163, note 62.

seems to portray it as a return to where she belongs. But this should not be read negatively, for in *Nanon* the private sphere is depicted positively, and the micro-society that she and Émilien create, and the cross-class marriages which take place there may be seen to embody Republican ideals which were not realised during the Revolution.

Underlying the argument of this chapter has been the suggestion that the valorisation of the private and the feminine in these novels is not only reflected in the use of narrative forms marked by the private, but also to some extent dependent on it. *Nanon* itself does not contradict this assertion (I shall discuss narrative voice in this novel later), but the similarities it presents with other novels in Sand's *œuvre* do raise the question of the importance of narrative voice. Robert Godwin-Jones makes the link between *Nanon* and, for example, *Le Pêché de Monsieur Antoine* (1847) when he writes that *Nanon* founds 'what is in effect the agricultural commune advocated in Sand's socialist novels'.<sup>48</sup> In addition, novels such as *La Ville noire* (1861) and *Mademoiselle Merquem* (1868), which are both third-person narratives, contain examples of 'feminine' utopia: Tonine transforms the social conditions of the workers of the *Ville noire* after she inherits her brother-in-law's factory; and Célié is *marraine* to la Canielle, a small community formed by her grand-father and whose founding principles are that 'il faut se secourir et s'aimer, faire le bien sans accepter d'autre récompense que les joies du cœur'.<sup>49</sup> The community created in *La Ville noire* may be seen as the industrial counterpart to *Nanon*'s agrarian commune, for Tonine's transformation of the factory is an extension into the public, economic sphere of her altruistic devotion to others, previously confined to the private sphere. In this earlier novel there is even a similar blurring of social hierarchies at the end, when both the proletarian 'ville noire' and the bourgeois 'ville haute' come together to celebrate Tonine and Sept-Épée's wedding. *La Canielle*, however, stands apart from these two

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<sup>48</sup> Godwin-Jones, *Romantic Vision*, p. 286. The link between the feminine and socialism in Sand's fiction is an interesting one, though it does not fall within the ambit of this thesis to develop it at length. Given that both are clearly represented in her novels as forces which oppose the established order, the 'socialist' nature of the feminine utopian communities one finds in *Nanon* and *La Ville noire* is hardly co-incidental.

<sup>49</sup> Sand, *Mademoiselle Merquem*, p. 160.



industrial and agrarian communities, not only because the economic element is missing, but also because a social hierarchy remains in place. As in *La Ville noire*, social hierarchies are mirrored in a vertical topographical distinction: Célie's castle is at the top of the cliff, the village is at the bottom. In *Mademoiselle Merquem*, as opposed to *Nanon* and *La Ville noire*, this social hierarchy is not broken down.

What distinguishes the female-voiced text from these two novels with male narrators is the status accorded to the heroine, for in *Mademoiselle Merquem* and *La Ville noire* the female protagonists are presented principally as objects of male desire. This is particularly evident in *Mademoiselle Merquem*, for the novel centres around the quest of the narrator, Armand, to make Célie his wife. Much of the beginning of this novel is concerned with establishing Célie's place on the market as a commodity available to be exchanged between men. In this context, her espousal of independence over marriage is viewed negatively. Armand's aunt, madame du Blossay, describes Célie in these terms:

C'est une personne très-intéressante et très-remarquable, encore jeune et belle [. . .], très-excentrique, il faut l'avouer [. . .]. Elle professe l'amour absolu de l'indépendance [. . .]. Elle n'est extraordinaire que sur un point, l'obstination qu'elle a mise à ne pas connaître les joies, les peines et les devoirs de la famille. (pp. 16-17)

One of madame du Blossay's friends is less charitable in her comments: 'Est-ce que vous comprenez une femme sans amour et sans famille? Elle [Célie] a tort, il n'y a pas à dire. Elle le sait, elle en convient, et elle persiste. Enfin c'est une exception, une anomalie, un défi jeté à la nature et à la société' (p. 25). Armand's quest (he himself uses the word 'lutte' on p. 65) will be to extract her from this independence and to possess her. This romantic quest forms the basis of the novel's plot, and the community of La Canielle is first introduced in a rather negative fashion. Armand is derogatory in the way he presents this community's love for Célie:

Elle était adorée, non pas de cet amour éclairé qui apprécie bien le dévouement et se rend compte de la valeur de la personne aimée, mais de cet attachement fidèle et toujours un peu égoïste qui est particulier au paysan. (p. 95)



If these people are seen to love Célie egoistically, then his love for her is of the opposite, superior type. The latent hostility of these remarks will soon become more prominent, as the inhabitants of La Canielle become, in his eyes, rivals for Célie's affection. When he is told of the jealous attachment of this community to Célie, he thinks: 'Il me fallait donc la disputer à un petit monde jaloux, tenace, et peut-être capable de tout pour la retenir et l'accaparer' (p. 105). His later initiation into the community of La Canielle leads him to overcome this rivalry, but it is soon replaced by another obstacle: the questions raised about Célie's purity. She is suspected of having had a relationship with a man of dubious morals, and there are also rumours that a child supposedly rescued from a shipwreck is in fact her own illegitimate baby. As her purity is placed in doubt, so her 'market value' falls in Armand's eyes, and he admits to seeing her as 'mon idole souillée' (p. 176). This fluctuation in Célie's value is however ended when it is revealed that these rumours were intended to test Armand's love. He can thus again affirm her value based on her purity: 'le fait de sa pureté sans tache [. . .] la faisait [. . .] plus désirable qu'aucune jeune fille de vertu non éprouvée' (p. 205). Presented as the object of male desire, Célie's identity and value are dependent on this male gaze, and her achievements in the community of La Canielle are, initially at least, accorded minimal importance.

One can see a similar pattern of active, desiring male and passive, desirable female in *La Ville noire*. Told in the third person, this narrative is not marked by the personal desires of the narrator, but his presentation of the female protagonist still reduces her to the status of object. The novel opens on what will be its central concerns: Sept-Épées's ambition and his desire for Tonine. The social and emotional quest of the male protagonist will again be at the heart of the plot, and his character the principal focus of the narrative. Tonine is seen from the outside, and her story is secondary to that of Sept-Épées. Like Célie, she claims not to want to marry, but she is still presented as a 'marriageable' object for much of the novel, with her good deeds in the community seen as increasing her desirability rather than as proof of her independence. The respect in which she is held by the townspeople makes Sept-Épées proud of her, but he is also jealous of the attention other men pay to her.

Anthime, the doctor, finds her immediately attractive, and her value is increased by reports of her selfless devotion to others. He says to her: 'je vous ai vue faire tant de bien et j'en ai tant entendu dire de vous à tout le monde, que j'ai réclamé de mon père la permission de vous demander en mariage'.<sup>50</sup> Until almost the end of the novel, Tonine's work in the private sphere is subsumed in a narrative perspective which prioritises male desire and emotion.

It is this reduction of the heroine to the status of desirable object that is absent in *Nanon*. Nanon presents herself as an independent heroine, and her narrative is not marked by a desire to attract the male gaze. Although it is clear to the reader that Émilien is in love with Nanon and wishes to marry her, Nanon appears to be ignorant of this and her reaction when she first learns of his love is one of shock:

Je restai interdite et confuse. L'amour!  
Jamais Émilien ne m'avait dit ce mot-là, jamais je ne me l'étais dit à moi-même. Je croyais qu'il me respectait trop et qu'aussi il me protégeait trop pour vouloir faire de moi sa maîtresse.  
- Taisez-vous, Dumont, répondis-je, Émilien n'a jamais eu de mauvaises idées sur moi; il m'a trop juré qu'il m'estimait pour que j'en puisse douter.  
(p. 175)

On the one hand Nanon's reaction is realistic in that she can only see herself becoming Émilien's mistress (marriage between an aristocrat and a peasant being unthinkable at the time). However, her surprise at, and rejection of, the suggestion that Émilien is in love with her also reveal that, unlike heroines such as Flavie and Moréna, the search for the love of a man is not central to Nanon's identity, and she is therefore not flattered when she learns of Émilien's love. In her narrative she does not situate herself principally as a sexual object seeking recognition and a sense of value through the desiring male gaze. Instead she positions herself beyond an economy of male desire and represents herself differently.

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<sup>50</sup> George Sand, *La Ville noire* (Meylan: Editions de l'Aurore, 1989) p. 107.

It is this refusal to place the female character in the position of desirable object which testifies to the importance of the female narrative voice in these later novels.

Displacement of the male narrator frees the narrative from the centrality of male desire. Given that women are contained within the male narrative as objects of desire and idealised or denigrated as such, it is important that by writing they can to some extent disengage themselves from this and affirm their difference. Writing for female protagonists has the potential of allowing them to affirm their own identity, rather than this being imposed on them. Private, confessional writing in Sand's fiction has been shown to have a positive effect on some of the female characters, especially in those cases where it is a part of self-analysis and self-definition. But other of Sand's female-narrated fictions go beyond this, for by taking on the role of narrator in novels which are no longer in letter form, the female characters in Sand's later fiction disrupt the link between writing and the Law of the Father. Their occupation of the means of representation, which is also a site for the production of meaning, creates the conditions for transforming representation and for writing differently. This is precisely what the narrators of *Nanon* and of *Césarine Dietrich* do.

This difference is not, however, immediately apparent in *Nanon*, and indeed the first lines of the novel would seem to place the narrative firmly within patriarchal conventions. Nanon writes:

J'entreprends, dans un âge avancé, en 1850, d'écrire l'histoire de ma jeunesse.  
Mon but n'est pas d'intéresser à ma personne; il est de conserver pour mes enfants et petits-enfants le souvenir cher et sacré de celui qui fut mon époux. (p. 31)

Nanon writes her narrative as a mother and grandmother, supposedly with her children and grandchildren in mind. However, this is not what is most significant about the position from which she writes: Nanon is also crucially a widow. By undertaking to write only *after* the death of her husband, her narrative earns the seal of patriarchal propriety, for it has been written in the 'freedom' of widowhood and not at the expense of her devotion to her husband and family. This 'propriety' is

further enhanced when one considers that although on a number of occasions Nanon asserts her identity both as peasant and as woman, writing this identity is not the ostensible function of her *récit*. She instead presents it as having as its centre the man who was at the centre of her life, that is, her husband Émilien. Written the year after his death, these memoirs are apparently written to preserve *his* memory. For Nanon, it would seem that writing must take as its subject the male, with herself, the woman, in the secondary, supportive role. Her *récit* is thus presented as being concerned with the masculine and the public rather than the feminine and the private.

Peter Dayan reads Nanon's introduction to her narrative as a typical example of female submission to the male. It is an ideology for which he finds further evidence in the novel, and notes three other examples of what he calls this 'sexisme [. . .] effrayant'.<sup>51</sup> All share the same theme of the wife's submission to her husband, the first one quoted here expressing Nanon's reaction when she learns that Marie-Antoinette has been guillotined:

- Pourquoi faire mourir une femme? disais-je, quel mal peut-elle avoir fait? N'était-ce pas à elle d'obéir à son mari et de penser comme lui? (p. 154)

Une femme donne toujours raison et autorité à celui qu'elle aime. (p. 195)

Émilien, s'il est mon mari, sera mon maître et je serai contente de lui obéir. (p. 216)

These remarks can be countered if one looks less at what Nanon says, than at what she does: even if Nanon's life centres around Émilien and she considers him more important than herself, there is never any question of her being submissive to him, or subordinate to his authority. The concepts of obedience, authority and mastery have no application in their existence. It is therefore all the more surprising to see such concepts apparently advocated by Nanon on a number of different occasions. And yet, when they are placed in context, it is possible to motivate each of these statements, and show how they should not be read as examples of sexism. The first

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<sup>51</sup> Dayan, *Lautréamont et Sand*, p. 39.

exemplifies Nanon's faith in female nature, and needs to be considered against the background of the political, even pornographic, propaganda against Marie-Antoinette which proliferated following the Revolution of 1789. Even prior to this, the queen was vilified in the satirical press for various adulterous affairs, lesbianism and even incest. At the time of her trial she was further accused of squandering public money, of counterrevolutionary conspiracies, and of having a perverse influence on the king. These charges, Lynn Hunt argues, reflected 'a fundamental anxiety about queenship as the most extreme form of women invading the public sphere'.<sup>52</sup> If the persecution of Marie-Antoinette became a means of eradicating what Hunt calls 'the menace of the feminine and the effeminizing to republican notions of manhood and virility' (p. 110) it is notable that Nanon does not participate in the demonisation of the former queen. Instead she evinces a greater understanding of this woman, and in a sense even defends her against certain of the accusations that were levelled against her for she questions whether, given that it was the husband who exercised power in marriage, Marie-Antoinette could have exerted significant influence over the king. Her statement about Marie-Antoinette thus contains an implicit criticism of the violence perpetrated by men against this woman. Moreover, in what she says about the execution of the queen, Nanon does not state that it is woman's duty to obey her husband, but rather phrases it as a question to Émilien, whose reply corrects her naivety:

Émilien me répondait que c'est souvent le mari qui obéit à la femme.  
- Quand la femme voit plus juste, disait-il, c'est un bien, et je crois que  
celui qui t'épousera aura raison de te consulter sur toute chose. (p. 154)

But this does not appear to be a perspective which Nanon adopts, for she repeats on two further occasions her understanding of the male as the dominant partner in marriage, and hence in society. And yet on both these occasions there are good reasons for voicing this patriarchal ideology. In the first case, she is speaking to Costejoux, a Republican lawyer, who is in love with Louise, Émilien's sister, who

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<sup>52</sup> Lynn Hunt, 'The Many Bodies of Marie-Antoinette: Political Pornography and the Problem of the Feminine in the French Revolution' in *Eroticism and the Body Politic*, ed. by Lynn Hunt (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 108-30 (p. 123).

herself still clings to the prejudices of the nobility. Nanon's words are designed to encourage him in his wish to marry Louise, whose thinking she must hope will be modified by his influence. In the second case Nanon is speaking to Louise and is trying to overcome the latter's resistance to a possible marriage with Costejoux. Although Louise admits her love for Costejoux, she cannot accept the possibility of marrying someone whom she calls 'l'ennemi de ma race' (p. 216), and she asks Nanon to accept instead that she live with her and Émilien after their marriage. When Nanon replies that she will be happy to obey her husband's wishes, this is a means of giving a non-committal answer and of encouraging Louise to think seriously about her feelings for Costejoux. It is also perhaps a means of reassuring Louise that although her brother wishes to marry a peasant, she will not dominate or corrupt him, thus overcoming any remaining resistance to this union. In both these situations, Nanon uses a patriarchal discourse for particular ends. It is not however an ideology which has an application in her own existence, for the community she strives to create undermines the idea that one person should have authority over another. Nanon is forced to adopt a patriarchally-determined feminine position and to mimic the discourse of submission, that of the acceptable feminine position in society, whilst working to undermine it in her actions. This is the quiet feminine revolution taking place in *Nanon*.

Dayan, in his analysis of Nanon's sexism, offers a different explanation, and he argues that 'pour assurer la cohérence d'un roman, une femme devait assumer, soit des valeurs masculines et raisonnables, soit une voix masculine. Nanon [. . .] choisi[t] la première option; Sand choisit normalement la deuxième'.<sup>53</sup> Although the general premiss of this argument concurs with much of my own thinking on Sand, it cannot be applied to *Nanon* for the simple reason that three of Dayan's examples of Nanon's sexism are not the words of Nanon the narrator, but of Nanon the character. It seems to me essential to distinguish these two figures, especially given the difference in age, for Nanon at seventy five is not necessarily the same person that she was at fifteen. It

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<sup>53</sup> Dayan, *Lautréamont et Sand*, p. 42.



is the older Nanon who is writing the story and who should thus align herself with 'les valeurs masculines et raisonnables' (ibid.), but Dayan gives only one example of narrative sexism (the second sentence of the novel). Although this appears as an alignment with masculine values, it is important to emphasise that it is merely a tactical accommodation with patriarchal conventions of writing which is soon subverted.

When considering the opening lines of *Nanon*, one must be aware of the fact that although Nanon presents her presence (that of the woman) as being marginal to that of Émilien, the man, it is a marginality which she soon transgresses. There can be no doubt that the focus of the *récit* is Nanon, and that these are in fact her memoirs. Nanon claims adherence to a literary tradition which places the male at the centre of the novel as active and desiring protagonist, but it is one to which she pays only lip service. Émilien, the supposed focus of these memoirs, is introduced through and by her, and his presence on a narrative level is almost always motivated by his relation to her. What he does beyond the scope of her vision is rarely reported, as if to emphasise the importance of her presence in his life, and perhaps also her reluctance to claim narrative control over that which she has not directly experienced. To my knowledge there is only one important event at which Nanon was not present, but which she nonetheless recounts, and this is Émilien's journey to Limoges to enlist in the Republican army, which concludes with his arrest on suspicion of being a traitor to the Republic. The wording of Nanon's introduction to this episode is instructive as to the real focus of the narrative:

Je le suivrai dans son voyage, car ce qui lui arriva est plus intéressant que le chagrin contre lequel je me débattais en attendant son retour. Dumont avait voulu l'accompagner, c'est par lui que j'ai su une partie des détails.  
(p.109)

The fact that Nanon as narrator feels the need to motivate the narrative focus following Émilien, its shift from her worry to his 'more interesting' adventures, confirms that it is in fact her experiences which are normally at the centre of the narrative. This is an exceptional moment in the narrative, and one in which she is not

entirely at ease, for she undercuts the authority of this narrative position by stating one of the sources of her information. Narrative control of someone else's life appears to be anathema to her, and she concentrates her *récit* on events of which she has direct experience. Later, the account of Émilien's time in the army, a part of his life of which he is particularly proud and which he considers central to his identity as a *citoyen*, is restricted to the minimum of information provided by his letters. This would further suggest that Émilien is not really at the centre of the narrative, for it seems inconceivable that events which in his eyes expiate his noble birth should be given such a low profile in writings which set out to preserve his memory.

Nanon's introduction to her memoirs can also be read as an example of a feminine perspective colouring the narrative, for it can be read as a blurring of the boundaries between biography and autobiography, between self and other, public and private at the level of the narrative. Nanon does not inscribe a public and general memory of Émilien's life, nor does she write a semi-objective account of his life in the form of a biography. Instead she writes her personal and private memory of him, which accounts for her central position in the narrative. Indeed the narrative may be seen to reflect Nanon's feminine relation to the other, for it emphasises her openness to others and the fact that almost everything she does is for others rather than for herself.

Nanon's narrative is marked by a tension between accommodation with and subversion of masculine values. Dayan's conclusion thus needs to be nuanced somewhat to stress the tactical nature of this accommodation, and also to show how Nanon's alignment with masculine values in the introduction to her *récit* is merely superficial. One only has to compare the narrative perspective of *Nanon* with that of *Indiana* to be convinced of this latter point. The lack of a masculine perspective is evident when, during her journey to Limoges after Émilien's arrest, Nanon tends to her feet. She writes:

J'avais donc de bons pieds, j'en étais contente. Je ne me sentais plus lasse. J'étais prête à faire le tour de la France pour suivre Émilien. (p. 120)

What is stressed here is Nanon's mobility and freedom. In *Indiana*, on the other hand, when women's feet are referred to, it is in from the fetishistic perspective of a male observer. The narrator notes Raymon's thoughts as he compares Indiana and Noun: 'elle [Indiana] eût pu emprisonner ses pieds dans des souliers de satin, mais sa chaste robe n'eût pas ainsi trahi les mystères de sa jambe mignonne' (p. 101). Nanon, in her narrative, not only succeeds in representing woman differently, but also writes a different relation to the other, private rather than public, inclusive rather than exclusive.

Pauline, the female narrator of *Césarine Dietrich* adopts a similarly feminine position in her narrative, by refusing to adopt the authoritative position which Naomi Segal sees as a characteristic of narratives and literature in the nineteenth century. Segal argues that 'authorship becomes a relation with the reader in which the latter (in parallel with the protagonist) is the aspirant, the child bidding to understand, to acquire the wisdom of the text, with knowledge and irony as the chief stakes of control'.<sup>54</sup> Authority is linked with paternity in her analysis: 'For a man to write fiction is to take up in phantasy the position of oedipal father' (p. 19). In *Césarine Dietrich* authority and domination are portrayed as undesirable qualities, and Pauline's narrative can be said to reflect this. Whilst the narrative form of this novel resembles that of *Horace*, in that it is a first-person, even autobiographical narrative which is also the biography of another character, the narrative position adopted by Pauline is almost diametrically opposed to that of Théophile: unlike the narrator of this earlier novel, Pauline avoids judging Césarine and she does not burden her narrative with the philosophical musings that accompany Théophile's *récit* (his introductory remarks on 'l'amitié', for example).<sup>55</sup> I should like to suggest that this is because the narrative stance of *Césarine Dietrich* is maternal rather than paternal.

From the earliest stages of the novel, Pauline presents herself as being characterised by a need to love others, and says to Césarine: 'Je n'aime pas à demi, et je suis

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<sup>54</sup> Naomi Segal, *The Adulteress's Child* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 20.

<sup>55</sup> See *Horace*, pp. 27-28.

malheureuse quand je ne peux pas donner un peu de bonheur à ceux qui m'entourent' (p. 7). Later she links this ability to love others with the maternal instinct when Césarine asks, 'Crois-tu que je pourrais devenir tendre, si je le voulais?', and she replies 'Non [. . .] Tu n'as pas l'âme maternelle' (pp. 116-17). This 'sollicitude maternelle' (p. 214) is presented at one point as having perhaps influenced Pauline's view of Césarine, for Paul says: 'Je ne saurais dire combien d'illusions d'amour maternel se sont glissées dans le panégyrique qu'elle [Pauline] me faisait de sa brillante élève' (p. 84). Indeed, in her narrative, Pauline avoids explicit condemnation of Césarine's behaviour. In the same way that she refuses to dominate Césarine, even though her role as governess would give her the necessary authority to do so, Pauline refuses to dominate her narrative and to provide an authoritative judgement of Césarine. Instead she seeks to understand the woman she is writing about, and in response to Paul's negative view of Césarine after his first discussion with her, she tries to be less critical:

- Je te jure, s'écria-t-il [Paul], que cette fille est insensée ou méchante. Elle est habituée à tout dominer, elle veut mettre son pied mignon sur toutes les têtes!
- Non, lui dis-je, elle est bonne. C'est une enfant gâtée, un peu coquette, voilà tout. (p. 86)

Pauline does not claim control over the characters she is writing about through a superior knowledge of them and of their motivations. She does not, for example, describe Rivonnière when he first becomes important in the novel, preferring instead to record Césarine's view of him. In Césarine's case, she analyses the forces that have constructed her as she is, and also expresses her continued love for her. Even though relations between herself and Césarine appear to be soured permanently by the latter's attempted adultery with Paul, her narrative is not marked by a vindictive desire to show Césarine in a completely negative light. Pauline's narrative position thus reflects the refusal to seek domination of the other through superior knowledge which is typified as feminine in Sand's novels.

Furthermore, Pauline does not place herself at the centre of the narrative, and admits at the end of the novel: 'Je dois terminer un récit, que je n'ai pas fait en vue de moi-même, par quelques mots sur moi-même' (p. 319). This reluctance to speak about the self, to include personal details may indicate something of a general unease in this narrative position. This is, if anything, emphasised when one considers that not only does she avoid explicitly negative judgements of Césarine, but she also highlights the limitations of her own perspective. Pauline is not without prejudices, and she makes clear at the outset of the narrative her attachment to a hierarchy of social classes: 'Je ne m'arrêterai pas sur les répugnances que j'eus à vaincre pour entrer, moi fille noble et destinée à une existence aisée, chez une famille de bourgeois enrichis dans les affaires' (p. 1). These prejudices are not entirely overcome, and although they do not seem to influence her portrayal of Césarine, they are certainly present in her attitude towards Marguerite, who is defined in her eyes by her class origins: 'Marguerite était une vraie fille du peuple, avec les qualités et les défauts qui signalent une éducation rustique' (p. 129). At the close of the novel she admits that these prejudices may have influenced her judgement of Marguerite:

J'ai eu aussi mes torts, et je m'en confesse. Le principal a été de douter trop longtemps du progrès dont Marguerite était susceptible. Peut-être ai-je eu des préventions qui, à mon insu, prenaient leur source dans un reste de préjugés de naissance ou d'éducation. (p. 319)

By admitting her conformist, patriarchally-conditioned position, Pauline undercuts her own narrative authority and judgements. Unlike the male narrators in Sand's fiction, she does not claim a position of infallibility and omniscience: hers is one of maternal concern rather than paternal domination.

This contrast between the masculine and feminine narrative positions, which are themselves products of the different ways of relating to the other exemplified in *Le Marquis de Villemer*, can also be seen in an earlier novel, *François le Champi*. This most famous of Sand's novels is told orally by two narrators, a woman and a man, and then filtered again through the eyes and words of another, male narrator. The female narrative voice which begins the oral telling of the story is, to my knowledge,

the closest one comes in Sand's work to a third-person female narrator. My reasons for introducing this earlier novel here are not simply that Monique's narrative shares a number of characteristics with those of Pauline and Nanon, but also that the male narrator involved in the oral narration of François's story comments on women's participation in the creation of narratives.

It is the female voice of La Mère Monique which begins the narrative of *François le Champi*, but after recounting about a third of the story she asks the *chanvreux* to take over. This eclipsing of the female voice reflects that of the feminine in the story, for Monique's abandonment of the narrative coincides with the intrusion and increasing dominance of masculine values. Her narrative is centred less on events than on the relationship between Madeleine and François, the similarity of their characters and on the bond they create. She says:

Or donc, ces deux personnes-là vivaient contentes de ce qu'elles avaient à consommer en fait de savoir, et elles le consumaient tout doucement, s'aidant l'une l'autre à comprendre et à aimer ce qui fait qu'on est juste et bon. Il leur venait par là une grande religion et un grand courage, et il n'y avait pas de plus grand bonheur pour elles que de se sentir bien disposées pour tout le monde.<sup>56</sup>

Theirs is an idyllic relationship, placed significantly under the sign of the mother, which is broken up by the intervention of Madeleine's husband, forcing François to enter a society based on masculine values. These masculine values are not ones which François accepts - he is characterised by a complete lack of self-interest and a desire to help others - but they are values which dominate the public sphere in which he now moves and on which the novel now concentrates.

This move from feminine idyll to the reality of masculine, patriarchal society is mirrored in the narrative by the shift from female to male narrative voice. It is possible to posit a relation of cause and effect between this change of content and the

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<sup>56</sup> George Sand, *François le Champi* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), pp. 104-05. All further references are to this edition and will be given after quotations in the text.



change of narrative voice. When Monique relinquishes the telling of the story to the *chanvreur*, she says:

- Savez vous qu'il y a longtemps que je parle? [. . .] Je n'ai plus le poumon comme à quinze ans, et m'est avis que le chanvreur, qui connaît l'affaire mieux que moi-même, pourrait bien me relayer. D'autant mieux que nous arrivons à un endroit où je ne me souviens plus si bien. (p. 112)

She does not want to continue the telling of the story because she cannot guarantee that what she is recounting is in fact the 'truth'. She cannot claim to speak with certainty of François's exploits in the public sphere because she is excluded from it as a woman. She introduces the *chanvreur* as the source of Truth, and he narrates François's social quest to earn the right to be Madeleine's husband, and his battle with the forces that would try to separate them. Even though Sand's choice of the *chanvreur* as narrator may be seen as part of a concern, evident in her novels, that disenfranchised groups should accede to speech, his narrative is nonetheless marked by a number of features which link him to other, more powerful Sandian narrators, and the resultant contrast between the narrative styles of Monique and the *chanvreur* reveals that gender concerns are not absent from a novel often regarded as depicting a pastoral idyll.

Unlike Monique, the *chanvreur* stands authoritatively over his narrative and imbues it with a certain ideology that had been absent from Monique's part of the story. The narrative is for him a vehicle for his own thoughts and philosophy, and he does not hesitate to assert his own opinions. His account of François's story thus becomes marked not only by a particular gender ideology (he asserts for example that: 'il en est d'eux [des prêtres] comme des femmes, qui sont toute bonté ou toute chétivité', p. 163), but also includes a lengthy digression on the perils of buying land and on how the interest charged ruins the peasant (pp. 197-98). When he is questioned on the veracity of the story, he insists on the link between his narrative and fact, and hence on his privileged relationship to the Truth. In response to the question: 'L'histoire est donc vraie de tous points?', he says: 'Si elle ne l'est pas, elle le pourrait être [. . .], et si vous ne me croyez, allez y voir' (p. 251). These trappings of the masculine,

authoritative narrative, which have also characterised novels such as *Indiana* and *Le Dernier amour*, are absent from Monique's narrative discourse.

The difference between the two narrators' approaches to story-telling encapsulates the contrast between narrative voices and narrative authority that I have been positing as reflective of masculine and feminine relations to the other. But something more significant is revealed when the *chanvreux* challenges Monique's reasons for no longer wishing to tell the story. He says:

- Et moi [. . .] je sais bien pourquoi vous n'êtes plus mémorieuse au milieu comme vous l'étiez au commencement; c'est que ça commence à mal tourner pour le champi, et que ça vous fait peine, parce que vous avez un cœur de poulet, comme toutes les dévotes, aux histoires d'amour. (p. 113)

Not only does the male narrator not accept Monique's explanation, but he imposes his own which is based on a generalisation about women, assumed to be accepted knowledge: like all pious women ('dévotes' being in the feminine) she is too sentimental or emotional (and there is a strong implication that this should be considered weak) to tell a story in which the main character suffers in love. This gender-genre link however hides something more serious, for the *chanvreux* effectively excludes women from the creation of important and serious narratives. For him, the voice of literature must be one of authority and reason, one which can transcend the emotional, which is ultimately also to say, a masculine and public rather than a feminine and private voice.

#### (iv) Conclusion

Given the exclusion of the female voice and the repression of the feminine in male-narrated novels, the importance of women writing their own stories is evident. Sand's later novels show how writing is linked to subjectivity, and to the affirmation and demonstration of women's difference. The first-person epistolary and confession novels of this period participate in this project, for by avoiding the third-person

omniscient narrative, these novels give us access to the female character as subject in process, rather than as the object of male desire. Indeed, the adoption of such a 'public', masculine narrative position would appear to be incompatible with the revalorisation of the private that these novels inscribe. Yet this is only one part of a larger project, for Sand's late fiction suggests that, in both a literary and political context, the private is not enough: there is a need to engage in the public sphere, but to do so differently, as women, and thus ultimately to break down the division public-private. These novels question the association of literature and the masculine, and seek, by breaking the link between writing and the Law of the Father, to create a different means of writing and representation.

## Conclusion

Reading Sand through the theories of French feminists such as Irigaray and Cixous, whose work springs from a psychoanalytic and deconstructionist tradition, and through the work of American feminists such as Schor and Lanser reveals a Sand who was more than simply a writer of 'stories' or a virago who devoured men such as Musset and Chopin and reconstituted her life and loves in her novels. It reveals instead that *the* French woman writer of the nineteenth century also merits recognition as a feminist thinker.

In traditional views of her work, the feminist engagement is meant to have lasted no more than a decade, and it is true that the violent denunciation of the ills of patriarchy of some of the early novels is absent from those later in her career. However, my contention is that a reflection on sexual difference is evident throughout her career, and that this is what makes many of her novels worthy of re-evaluation and rediscovery (if not in fact discovery). It seems to me that the contrast of a 'style d'homme' and a 'style de femme' in *Le Marquis de Villemer* can in fact be seen as a characteristic feature of the totality of Sand's *œuvre*, and as constituting its interest in a post-Beauvoir world. Sand herself may occasionally have adopted the garb of a man, but her novels inscribe both a subversion of authoritarian, masculine discourse, and a preoccupation with the idea of femininity as different, with difference here seen as superior rather than inferior.

My approach is undoubtedly not without its limitations. The omission of novels such as *Mauprat*, *Consuelo*, *La Mare au Diable*, *Jean de la Roche* and many others is to be regretted, but constraints both of time and space made such sacrifices inevitable. More serious, perhaps, are the problems which arise from my division of Sand's novels into three categories based on narrative voice. Any categorisation is inevitably to some extent artificial and reductive, and mine is no different, for although it allows for a consideration of the way Sand treats male and female narrative voices in her novels, it also obscures some of the links between these novels. It separates, for instance, narratives such as *Isidora* and *Lettres à Marcie* which both deal with the male as philosopher; it also separates *Jacques* and *Le Dernier Amour*, two novels in which there is a significant overlap of themes, characterisation, events and narrative discourse; finally it divides novels such as *La Filleule* from other narratives such as *Flavie*, *La Confession d'une jeune fille* and *Césarine Dietrich* which deal with similar issues pertaining to female identity. Yet many of the themes which link these novels only become apparent from a reading which considers issues pertaining to the gendering of narrative voice, and it is by separating these novels to place them firstly into dialogue with other similarly-structured novels that new links between them can subsequently be identified and explored. In this sense at least, the advantages of this approach outweigh its disadvantages.

But a more potentially damaging charge remains, and it is one which Toril Moi lays against Irigaray, namely that her emphasis on feminine difference returns her to biological essentialism, for 'to define woman is necessarily to essentialize her'.<sup>1</sup> The corollary of this is, of course, that she treats the discourse of patriarchy as some sort of unified and monolithic entity. It is certainly true that in my analysis of Sand's work I have tried to distil from a selection of novels what appear to be for her the characteristics of masculine and feminine discourses. Whilst these discourses are adopted by a variety of different speakers of different sexes, there is nonetheless in Sand's novels an equation of a certain discourse of patriarchy with male characters and also a linking of positive female characters to a discourse of femininity. Whilst

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<sup>1</sup> Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 139.

such an opposition based largely on sex is certainly problematic, it may also be seen, particularly in the context of nineteenth-century society, as a politically necessary one. The structures of patriarchy did, and still do, confirm a male hegemony, and the inferiority of the female. The need to go beyond this structure is clear, and simple reversal of the hierarchy will achieve nothing. As a first step towards this, the workings of patriarchy need to be uncovered, and this Sand achieves through the representation of male characters who adopt a patriarchal discourse, but whose blindspots are highlighted and whose authority is undermined. In the second stage, it is the difference of the feminine which offers the possibility for transcending an order which is not only inimical to female desires, but in which they also are defined by the male gaze, and hence in relation to men. Naomi Schor writes of Irigaray's theory of difference:

Irigaray's wager is that difference can be reinvented, that the bogus difference of misogyny can be reclaimed to become a radical new difference that would present the first serious historical threat to the hegemony of the male sex.<sup>2</sup>

My wager is that there is a discourse of difference which, although repressed to ensure the coherence of male-voiced narratives, is heard throughout Sand's *œuvre* and which similarly does not repeat that propounded by male characters, but both undermines and goes beyond the discourse of patriarchal authority.

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<sup>2</sup> Schor, 'This Essentialism Which Is Not One', p. 47.



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